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Mark Alexander, Max Beloff, Hilary Corke, William Glock, G. F. Hudson, Paul Linebarger, Kathleen Nott, Michael Oakeshott

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Daniel Bell

Notes on Work

Factories and Prisons

FOR about twenty years of his busy life, Jeremy Bentham devoted much of his energies to the elaboration in minutest detail of plans for a perfectly efficient prison. This was the famous *panopticon*, a circular building so intricately constructed "that every convict would pass his life in perpetual solitude, while remaining perpetually under the surveillance of a warder posted at the centre." Bentham had got the idea from his ingenious brother, Sir Samuel Bentham, a famous naval architect, who, while employed by Catherine the Great to build ships for Russia, had designed a factory along just those lines. For many years, in fact, Jeremy Bentham sought money from Parliament to build a "five-storied" panopticon, one half of which would be a prison, the other half a factory. (In 1813 he finally received £23,000 as compensation for money he had expended in his efforts to construct a model.)

The panopticon, said Bentham, was "a mill for grinding rogues honest and idle men industrious." This identification of factory and prison was, perhaps, quite natural for Bentham. Both prison and factory were united in his mind by the utilitarian notions of tidiness and efficiency. The root of utilitarianism is a passion for order and the elaboration of a calculus of incentives which, if administered in exact measures, would stimulate the individual to the correct degree of rectitude and work. And the modern factory, after all, is fundamentally a place of order, in which stimulus and response, the rhythms of work, derive from a mechanically imposed sense of time and pace.

The Logic of Size

THE contemporary enterprise * sets up three peculiar technologics: the logic of size as a function of market costs, the logic of functional efficiency, and the logic of hierarchy. Each of the three, the product of engineering rationality, imposes a set of constraints on the worker with which he is forced to wrestle every day. These are the daily facts of his existence.

For the man whose working day is from eight a.m. to five p.m., the morning often begins long before the time he has to be at his place of work. After a hasty wash and a quick breakfast, he is off in his car or on the tram or bus or subway: often he may have to spend an hour or more in getting to the plant. There seems to be a law, as Bertrand Russell has noted, that improvements in transportation do not cut down travelling time but merely increase the area over which people are compelled to travel.

Although this is the most obvious fact about modern work, few writers have concerned themselves with it, or with the underlying assumption that large masses of human labour should be brought to a common place of work. The engineer believes that concentration is technologically efficient: under one roof there can be brought together the source of power, the raw materials, the parts and assembly. So we find such huge megaliths as the sprawling

* All my illustrative material is taken from the US, for it is about that country I am best informed. But I imagine the general picture holds for the other industrialised countries as well—or will doubtless soon do so.

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shed at the Ford plant at Willow Run, spanning an acreage two-thirds of a mile long and a quarter of a mile wide, or such roofed-over mile-long pavements as at the Boeing plant in Wichita, Kansas.

Much of this thinking about the advantages of size was conditioned by the early problems of the limited amount of power available through the use of steam. For this reason, the engineer tended to crowd as many productive units as possible on the same shaft, or within the range of steam pressure that could be reached by pipes without excessive condensation losses. These considerations led, too, to the bunching of workers in the layout of work, since the machines had to be located along a straight-line shafting.

The introduction of electric power and electric motors allowed a new flexibility; and within the plant, newer work-flow designs often do avoid the antiquated straight-line shafts and aisles of the older factory. Yet the size of the factory remains unchallenged. But the question can be posed: Which is it cheaper to transport, living men twice a day, or materials and mechanical parts twice a week? As Percival and Paul Goodman so pertinently note: "The time of life of a piece of metal is not consumed while it waits for its truck; a piece of metal does not mind being compressed like a sardine." * What the Goodmans propose is production in "bits and pieces" rather than on an integrated assembly, yet the question is rarely considered, for few industries pay directly for their workers' travel time. Calculations in terms of market costs do not force the enterprise to take into account such things as the time used up in going to and from work, or the costs of roads and other transport to the factory site, which are paid for by the whole community out of taxes.

The Watching Hand of God

In his travel to and from work the worker is chained by time. Thousands of workers have to be in the same place at the same time. Time rules the work economy, its very rhythms and motions. After consulting Gulliver on the functions of his watch, the Lilliputians came to the belief that it was his god.

One of the prophets of modern work was Frederick W. Taylor (1856–1915) and the stop-watch was his bible. If any such social upheaval can ever be attributed to one man, the logic of efficiency as a mode of life is due to him. With "scientific management," as enunciated by Taylor, and with the assembly line as refined by Henry Ford, we pass far beyond the old rough computations of the division of labour; we go into the division of time itself.

The significance of Taylorism lies in its attempt to enact a social physics. Once work was scientifically plotted, Taylor felt, there could be no disputes about how hard one should work or the pay one should receive for labour. "As reasonably might we insist on bargaining about the time and place of the rising and setting sun," he once said. For a managerial class which, at the turn of the century, had seen the erosion of its old justificatory mystique of "natural rights," the science of administration *per se* provided a new foundation for its moral authority. And the managers were quick to claim it.

Scientific management in essence is simply the systematic analysis and breakdown of work into the smallest mechanical component and the rearrangement of these elements into the most efficient combination. Taylor achieved fame in 1899 when he took a Dutchman named Schmidt and taught him to shovel forty-seven tons instead of twelve and a half tons of pig iron a day. Every detail of the man's job was specified: the size of the shovel, the bite into the pile, the weight of the scoop, the distance to walk, the arc of the swing, and the rest periods that Schmidt should take. By systematically varying each factor, Taylor got the optimum barrow load. But Taylor knew too what such a mechanical regimen would do to a man, or rather, what sort of man could fit into this strait-jacket. "One of the very first requirements for a man who is fit to handle pig iron as a regular occupation," he wrote, "is that he shall be so stupid and so phlegmatic that he more nearly resembles an ox than any other type."

* *Communitas.* Percival and Paul Goodman, University of Chicago Press, 1947.

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The logic of Taylorism was obvious: each man's work could be measured by itself; the time in which an operation could be performed could "without bargaining" be established as an impersonal "standard time": pay could then be computed on the basis of the amount of work done and the time taken to do it.

In the modern economy, shadings of time are so important that a large company like General Motors contracts with its workers on a six-minute basis. For purposes of payroll calculations, General Motors divides the hour into ten six-minute periods, and, except for the daily three-hour "call-in pay," the G.M. worker is paid by the number of tenths of an hour he works.

Two Minor Prophets

While Taylor analysed the relations of work to time, another engineer, Frank Gilbreth (1868–1924) carried the process one step further: he detached human movement from its bearer and made of it an abstract visualisation. Not only could the pattern of machine work be broken down into elements, but human motion, too, could be "functionalised," and the natural movements of arms and legs could be ordered into a "one best way" of usage.*

Gilbreth isolated eighteen essential patterns of "kinetic units" or motions which he modestly called *therbligs* (or Gilbreth spelled backwards), and, from an analysis of the various combinations of therbligs, Gilbreth came to his principles of "motion economy." For example: two hands should begin and complete their therbligs at the same time; two hands should not be idle at the same instant except during rest periods; motions of the arms should be in opposite and symmetrical directions, etc. The penalty for violating these rules is Waste.

There was one further step in the inexorable logic of rationalisation. Where Taylor systematised factory operations and Gilbreth sought to reduce waste motion, Charles Bedeaux sought to combine these into a unit measurement of human power, not unsurprisingly called a "B," which would correspond to the "dyn," or the unit in physics of mechanical power. So defined, "a B is a fraction of a minute of work plus a fraction of a minute of rest always aggregating unity but varying in proportion according to the nature of the strain." Using this detailed calculus, Bedeaux formulated a complicated but mathematically neat system of wage payments which took into account not only the work done but the varying fractions of non-work or rest required in different operations, and increased or decreased payments correspondingly.*

The Logic of Hierarchy

The fragmentation of work, although atomising the worker, has also created a dependency and a hierarchy, for inherent in the division of labour is what Marx called "the iron law of proportionality." Thus, in the manufacturing process, the relations between numbers of workers are ordered by the requirements of the different technological complexities. Marx cited an example in type manufacture: one founder could cast 2,000 type an hour, the breaker could break up 4,000, and the polisher could finish 8,000 in the same time; thus to keep one polisher busy, the enterprise needed two breakers and four founders, and units were hired or discharged, therefore, in multiples of seven. Successively, in many other operations, notably on the assembly line, similar inflexible ratios become established, and the expansion and contraction

* The relation between the mode of visualisation by the engineer and the forms of expression of modern art have been compared vividly by S. Gideon (*Mechanization Takes Command*, Oxford, 1948). Just as Gilbreth's cyclographs—a worker's movements traced on a photographic plate—caught the abstract curves of motion divorced from the human mover, so Klee's caressing arcs and Kandinsky's volatile colour-bursts detached themselves from recognisable objects and became pure abstract visualisation.

* At its height, the Bedeaux system was used in the US by 720 corporations, employing 675,000 workers. The charges against Bedeaux, during the Second World War, of collaboration with Vichy, plus the bitter hostility of the unions to this method of mechanical wage calculations, brought the system into disuse.

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of work is in terms of the multiples of those ratios. But such dependency presupposes co-ordination, and with that the multiplication of supervisory hierarchies.

The logic of hierarchy, the third of the logics created by modern industry, is thus not merely the sociological fact of increased supervision which every complex enterprise demands, but is a peculiarly technological imperative. In a simple division of labour, for example, the worker has a large measure of control over his own working conditions, i.e. cleaning and repairing machines, the set-up and make-ready, obtaining his own materials, etc. Under a complex division of labour, these pass out of his control and he must rely on management to see that they are properly done. This dependence extends along the entire process of production. In so doing, modern industry has had to devise an entire new superstructure which organises and directs production. This superstructure draws in all possible brain work away from the shop; everything is centred in the planning and schedule and design departments. And in this new hierarchy there stands the technical employee, a figure known neither to the handicrafts nor to industry in its infancy. With the increasing growth of large factories, and the development of automatic processes, the engineer and the technician, "the semi-skilled engineer," assume an increasingly important role.

These three logics of size, time, and hierarchy converge in that great achievement of industrial technology, the assembly line: the long parallel lines require huge shed-space; the detailed breakdown of work imposes a set of mechanically paced and specified motions; the degree of co-ordination creates new social hierarchies.

The Pit and the Pendulum

THROUGHOUT industry today, the lives of millions of persons are ordered by production standards which most engineers and managers feel are as unarguable as the "time and place of the rising and setting sun." The old Puritan morality of a Captain John Smith, according to which he who will not work will not eat, becomes translated into the engineering morality of he who will not work a "fair day" should not receive "fair pay." But what does it mean, concretely, the establishment of a "fair day's work"? What is required of a worker? The basic wage contract between US steel and the CIO Steel Workers can be taken as an example. The contract, first negotiated on May 8th, 1946, defines a "fair day's work" as "that amount of work that can be produced by a qualified employee when working at a normal pace . . . a normal pace is equivalent to a man walking, without load, on smooth, level ground at a rate of three miles per hour."

This visceratonic definition then becomes a "benchmark" or gauge to define the degree of exertion of jobs in various other operations. In this way, classes of jobs are defined, and the conditions of pace and effort stipulated. For example:

Shovelling sand

Material: River sand, moisture 5·5 per cent approx.; weight per cu. ft. 100–110 lb.

Equipment: Materials handling box (steel) effective height above floor; 32-inch shovel—No. 2 furnace.

Working conditions: Under roof; smooth concrete floor; all other conditions normal.

Productive rate: For shovelling sand from pile to box—average weight sand on shovel—15 lb.; 12·5 shovelfuls per minute.

Packaging staples

Materials: $\frac{3}{4} \times 14$ gauge staples; 1 lb. per cardboard box.

Equipment: 3-lb. capacity metal scoop, platform scale; assembled cardboard boxes with one end open for filling; metal-covered working surface.

Working conditions: Inside, seated.

Productive rate: Filling scoop from pile of staples in tray, pouring 1 lb. into tray on scale, picking up tray and pouring into cardboard box, closing flaps on box, placing aside approximately 24-inch, 5·9 boxes a minute.

In the wage rationalisation programme of

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US Steel, completed only in 1947, descriptions of 1,150 benchmark jobs, within 152 representative classifications, were worked out with similar exactitude.

Throughout American industry one can find a dozen performance rating systems (some of them worked out pictorially in films), volumes of "standard data" on specific jobs, and other efforts to create "objective," comprehensive, yet simple measuring rods of work. Almost compulsively, like the philosopher reaching for the perfect metaphysical system with which to encompass all thought, the engineer reaches out for a system to encompass all time and motion, from the correct strokes of the janitor sweeping the floor to the typist drumming rhythmically on the electric keyboard of the typewriter.

The Revolt Against Work

For the engineer, the unwillingness of the workers to accept his definition of a "fair day's work" only shows how deeply rooted is their irrational temper. The puzzled manager does not understand, either, why workers persistently restrict output and so "reduce" their income. Yet the revolt against work is widespread and takes manifold form. Occasionally, although with decreasing emphasis—after all, how many variations on a theme are possible without becoming trite?—one finds literary protests, either from novelists who have ventured into the factory or factory workers who have described their experiences.

"This gadget was timed to turn out eight hundred welded shoes per hour," recalls a union organiser. "To make his production a skilful operator had to keep it going almost constantly. This required a degree of dexterity which a beginner believed impossible to attain —except for the cold fact that an old operator could do it. To master it, you had, in effect, to perform the old stunt of rubbing your belly and patting your head at the same time; that is, you had to learn to do one thing with one hand while doing something else with the other. The way the machine was timed, you just could not keep one hand idle while the other worked. When the dies were old and worn, the shoes stuck to them after they were welded and that added to the complication. It was then necessary to make another motion, banging one shoe with another to loosen it."

"You'd think that it would all become so automatic that you could do a lot of serious thinking on the job," observes a Chicago worker, Casmir Pantowski. "But you've got to be careful in placing the steel under the press. So even 'day-dreaming' is dangerous. Six guys on my shift have missing fingers."

Nor are the respites regarded as sufficient to provide relief. "After a few months . . . the regularity of the break and your dependence on it as a means for destroying the day, utterly rob it of its purpose," a young writer, Edward Wahl, notes. "Your first break on Wednesday (and you cannot prevent the consciousness from seeping through) means that you have six hours left for that day and twenty-two for the rest of the week. Not half the required forty hours is yet past, and only one-fourth of Wednesday's."

But most workers, by and large, are not so articulate about their work. Their behaviour itself becomes a judgement. First and foremost it appears in the constant evasion of thought about work, the obsessive reveries while on the job, and the substitution of the glamour of leisure for the drudgery of work. It also takes the form of slow-downs, a silent war against production standards, and most spectacularly in the violent eruptions of wildcat strikes against "speed-ups" or changes in the timing of jobs. A striking instance of this latter was the spontaneous walkout at River Rouge in July 1949, in resentment over the speed-up of the Ford assembly lines. The story is worth exploring in some detail.

The Fight at River Rouge

The dispute at River Rouge arose over the admitted fact that at various times of the day the Ford company was running the assembly lines at a speed higher than the stipulated rate. On six of the assembly lines in the "*b*" building at River Rouge, the speed was three to five per cent higher than normal: at the Lincoln plant at Highland Park, it was

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ten per cent higher.* But this speed-up, the company claimed, merely equalised the time lost when the line periodically shut down during the day; the *average* rate of work required of any man during the eight-hour shift was not higher than the stipulated rate. This was the nub of the issue. Did Ford have the right to specify at its own choice when the rest and make-up periods were to be taken?

The problem arose out of this context. Shortly after the Second World War, the Ford company made a time-study of all its work operations. Each job was studied and a standard time fixed. The time-study standard, however, is set without regard to the speed of the assembly line; it is simply a benchmark measure. Ideally, the line should be laid out so as to provide equal assignments for all workers. In practice, technical limitations make such an arrangement impossible. The result is that even when the line runs normally, the spacing of work is uneven and many workers complete their tasks before their neighbours and have to wait for them to complete theirs. But even then, the line does not run normally for long. Ford might set the line speed so as to produce a specific number of cars at the end of the day. But so complex is the scheduling process, with specially ordered items (like body-colour, white-walled tyres, etc.) having to meet a specific car, that the line inevitably encounters delay or breakdowns.

That some delay will occur during the day is predictable. But the time and duration of these delays is not. Hence the periodic speed-up of the line to equalise the day's production. But when the pace is increased the men already working at the full 100 per cent rate have to work faster than the time-study norm in order to keep pace with their neighbours. And it was around this group that the dispute revolved. The company argued as follows: "There is nothing in the contract which in any way indicates that [we] may not set [our] production standards on the basis of a day's work rather than on the basis of an hour's work or the work of each separate job performance by an employee." Moreover, said the company, the work could not be redistributed for technical reasons, while the cost of extra relief men would come to almost $5,500,000 yearly, adding 5 per cent to direct labour costs.

The union challenged the concept of a "production standard." The company's definition of a work total to be achieved during the day was not a production standard, it said, but a scheduling objective. If this objective could be achieved with the time set for specific jobs, fine; but if delays occurred that were not the workers' fault, the men should not be held responsible and asked to make up for them by working at a faster pace than the time-study rate set for the job. The company argued in rebuttal that the line stoppages during the day provided equivalent rest periods. But such reasoning, replied the union, is possible only if a man works on an individual job and is free to spurt ahead or coast along on the basis of his own work rhythms; on the assembly line the worker is not so free. The arbitration panel, headed by Professor Harry Shulman of Yale, ruled in favour of the union. The company could operate the lines at whatever speed it desired, but in so doing it must keep any individual's work assignment within the 100 per cent production-cycle time set for the job.

* How fast should an assembly line run? Here is how the approach is made through time-study. Assume that on an assembly unit there are 400 persons of whom only 320 actually build the car (the others include stock handlers, relief men, group leaders, drivers, etc.). Each man works an eight-hour day, or 480 minutes, less a 30 minute fatigue allowance. Hence 320 men put in 450 minutes each of labour, or a total of 144,000 minutes of human labour in an eight-hour shift. How long does it take to assemble a car? In the case of Ford, the company has decided it takes 550 minutes of labour to assemble one; hence, 144,000 divided by the time to assemble one car gives 262 cars as the number that can be produced by the 320 men in one eight-hour shift. Once the company figures the number of cars it can expect, it can now calculate the speed of the line. This is done by multiplying the number of cars (262) by the distance between the centre of one car on the line and the centre of the next—in this assembly unit about 20 feet. Multiply 20 feet by 262 cars and the line must travel 5,240 feet a day. Now the line runs for 480 minutes a day, and it has to go 5,240 feet to make the quota of 262 cars, hence it must run 10·92 feet a minute as the norm.

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Signs of Heresy

BEYOND the challenge by the unions themselves, some industrial engineers have begun to question the scientific validity of the foundations of Taylorism. Perhaps the strongest attack is in the work of Adam Abruzzi of Columbia University,* following the lead of William Gomberg, the industrial engineering director of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.† Abruzzi makes a sweeping challenge against the "standard data" procedures developed by engineers. In standard data, a work cycle is broken down into basic elements, each is timed, and standards developed for similar operations. Some methods have gone so far as to assign standard times for fundamental motions (i.e. move, reach, grasp, etc.). Abruzzi's problem was to see whether each of the elements were statistically independent, that is, whether the time assignment for each operation was independent of the ones preceding or following. His conclusion is that this statistical independence cannot be established, and that there is not even a constancy in the relation between them. Variations among the elements from worker to worker are so great as to cast doubt on the objectivity of the standard data.

Questioning of standard data led to the questioning, too, of the notion of the "one best way" of doing work, established by Gilbreth and now to be found in every textbook on the subject. The basic objection to standard data applies here too. One cannot add "bits of motion" and claim that the sum total of the bits is the most efficient motion: for, in motion patterns, the whole is more than the sum of the parts. This point is underscored in a recent volume by James Gillespie, one of the foremost British industrial engineers. "Motion study," he writes, "has become micromotionism and with its motion cameras, therbligs, micromotion clocks . . . it has become a complex, unwieldy technique. Worse still, with its . . . publication of principles such as that of minimum movement, it has divorced itself from practical, humanitarian knowledge." * Characteristic or "natural rhythm" patterns of motion, Gillespie asserts, may be more efficient than the mechanistic concept of the "one best way."

Drops in the Social River

BY AND large, however, the sociologist and the engineer have written off any effort to readjust the work process; the worker, like the mythical figure of Ixion, is chained for ever to the endlessly revolving wheel. But the spectacle has its unnerving aspect, and the sense of dehumanisation is oppressive, even to engineers. Industry has learned, moreover, that production actually suffers when only the mechanical engineering aspects of production are considered. Hence the growing vogue in recent years of "human relations." "[The] satisfactions of craftsmanship are gone, and we can never call them back," writes the Cornell sociologist, William F. Whyte. "If these were the only satisfactions men could get out of their immediate work, their work would certainly be a barren experience. There are other important satisfactions today: the satisfactions of human association and the satisfactions of solving technical and human problems of work."

The statement summarises the dominant school of thought which has grown out of the work of the late Elton Mayo of Harvard Business School and his followers. For Mayo, the characteristic fact about the modern scene is the presence of constant, disruptive change. The family, the primal group of social cohesion, breaks up as a work and educational unit; neighbourhood roots are torn up; and social solidarity, the key to human satisfactions, gives way to *anomie*. If solidarity is to be reestablished, it will have to be done within the corporation and the factory. "The manager," writes Professor Fritz Roethlisberger, Mayo's chief disciple at the Harvard Business School,

* *Work Measurement.* ADAM ABRUZZI. Columbia University Press, 1952.

† *A Trade Union Analysis of Time Study.* WILLIAM GOMBERG. Science Research Associates, 1948.

* *Dynamic Motion and Time Study.* JAMES J. GILLESPIE. Brooklyn, 1951. Abruzzi's book, it should be noted, is not an attack against all time and motion study, but fundamentally against "microscopic" studies.

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"is neither managing men nor managing work . . . he is administering a social system."

In this, as in many instances, social engineering imitates art. Twenty years ago the first "solidarity hymn" was penned by Aldous Huxley, in his *Brave New World*, and the refrain, voices by the Alphas and Betas, can be the school song for industrial sociology:

Ford, we are twelve: oh make us one
Like drops within the social river;
Oh, make us now together run
As swiftly as thy shining flivver.

This is not the place to recapitulate the many criticisms that have been made of the Mayo school. The fundamental point, as it affects the worker in his own work environment, is that the ends of production are taken as "given" and the worker is to be "adjusted" to his job so that the human equation matches the industrial equation. As one sociologist, Burleigh Gardner, succinctly phrased it: "The more satisfied he [the worker] is, the greater will be his self-esteem, the more content he will be, and therefore the more efficient in what he is doing." A fitting description of what might be called cow-sociology.

The source of this interest in "human relations" was the famous experiments at the Hawthorne works of the Western Electric company in Chicago, perhaps the most painstaking experiment in the history of the social sciences. The first question studied was about the relationship of fatigue to output. A group of five girls were subjected to exhaustive study; the methods were most meticulous in regard to scientific procedure and control. A series of possible "variables" affecting production were listed, e.g. amount of heat, degree of light, menstruation cycles of the workers, etc., and for a period of thirteen weeks at a time, one factor was changed while all others were constant. "A skilled statistician," Roethlisberger reports, "spent several years trying to relate variations in the physical circumstances of these five operators. For example, he correlated the hours that each girl spent in bed the night before with variations in output the following day. Inasmuch as some people said the effect of being out late one night was not felt the following day but the day after that, he correlated variations in output with the amount of rest the operators had had two nights before. . . . The attempt to relate changes in physical circumstances to variations in output resulted in not a single correlation of enough statistical significance to be recognised by any competent statistician as having any meaning."

Then came the great *éclaircissement*. In period XII of the experiment, the girls were returned to a bread-and-water diet, so to speak—i.e. to a forty-eight hour week without rest breaks, lunches, etc.—yet output kept rising! It then became clear that the workers were responding, not to any of the physiological or physical variables, but to the interest and attention centred on them! The experiment itself, not any outside factor, was the missing link, the unknown determinant. This led to the second phase of the Hawthorne experiment: the introduction of ambulatory confessors, or walking counsellors, ready at any moment to stop and listen to a harassed worker air his woes—though not usually to do anything about them. The effect on production was, apparently, good.

"Communication" and "Participation"

WHILE "human relations," as a result of the tremendous publicity given to the Hawthorne findings and of Mayo's further work, became a great vogue, personnel counselling in the broader sense has never spread widely, even within the Bell telephone system where it originated. The reason, in large measure, is that management itself has not fully understood its operation. There seemed to be no tangible "pay-off" in diminished cost or increased production that management could point to; moreover, it seemed to some to represent too much "coddling." And the sociologist, in this instance, has taxed the manager for not fully appreciating the benefits of what Huxley called "advanced emotional engineering."

If counselling has not been widely adopted, "communication and participation" has become a great management fad. In theory, communication is supposed to open a two-way

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street whereby those down the line can talk back to those above and thus "participate" in the enterprise. In few instances have such systems become operative. In most cases "communication" consists simply of employee newsletters or "chain-of-command" conferences in which vice-presidents meet with managers, managers with supervisors, supervisors with foremen, and in which the opinions of top management are transmitted. In some cases, the system operates with a characteristic Madison Avenue twist. At Westinghouse, for example, company messages were recorded on tape, and by dialling on the inter-plant telephone system one could listen to the instructions given to the hundreds of top supervisors. The dial number ostensibly was a secret confined to 1,200 supervisory employees. In practice, it was a secret in name only, since supervisors were instructed to "leak" the number "confidentially" to various employees, and these men, gleeful at knowing a secret, quickly spread the information to tens of others. The result was that thousands of workers eagerly rushed to listen to pep talks which at other times they might have received with utter indifference.

There are two points to be noted in the vogue of human relations. One is that, in the evident concern with understanding, communication, and participation, we find a change in the outlook of management, parallel to that in the culture as a whole, from authority to manipulation as a means of exercising dominion. The ends of the enterprise remain, but the methods have shifted, and the older modes of overt coercion are now replaced by psychological persuasion. The tough, brutal foreman, raucously giving orders, gives way to the mellow-voiced psychologically orientated supervisor. The worker doubtless regards this change as an improvement, and his sense of constraint is correspondingly assuaged. In industrial relations, as in large areas of American society, accommodation of a sort has replaced conflict.

The second point is that this approach in terms of human relations has become a substitute for thinking about the work process itself. All satisfactions are now extra-curricular: in the fellowship of a group, in aspirations for promotion, in leisure pursuits, etc. The rising standard of living has been coupled with the idea of an increase in leisure. Work is irksome, but if it cannot be evaded it can be reduced. In the old days, the shadings between work and leisure were not so easy to distinguish. In modern life the ideal is to minimise the unpleasant aspects of work as much as possible by pleasant distractions (wall colours, music, rest periods) and to hasten away from the factory as quickly as possible, uncontaminated by work, and unimpaired by its arduousness. A gleaming two-page ad in *Life* magazine shows a beautiful Lincoln car in the patio-living room of an elegantly simple house, and the ad proclaims: "Your home has walls of glass. Your kitchen is an engineering miracle. Your clothes and your furniture are beautifully functional. *You work easily: play hard. . . .*"

Status Bootstrap

THIS essay has talked by and large about "the" factory worker and the constraints imposed upon him. Certainly any of the large-scale generalisations that have been made become fuzzy if matched against the complex and protean reality. And factory work, after all, is only a small percentage of the work done in the US. Different occupational groups have their own work problems. A skilled worker may find his job monotonous and a chambermaid in a bustling metropolitan hotel may not. Nothing may be more deadly, perhaps, than the isolated, hermetic life of the bank teller in his cage or the elevator operator in his sealed jack-in-the-box. Longshoremen swear by their occupation, gaining satisfactions in the free use of muscle and the varieties of excitement on a big city pier, while scorning those who are tied down to the bench or lathe. Musicians, typographers, miners, seamen, loggers, construction workers all have their special cast of work. Yet the factory is archetypal because its rhythms, in subtle fashion, affect the general character of work the way a dye suffuses into a cloth. Coal mining, once spoken of as "underground farming," now—with the mechanisation of cutting and conveying—

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takes on much of the routinisation of factory work. In offices, the installation of rapid high-speed calculators, tabulators, and billing machines tends to turn the white-collar workers into mechanically paced drones. The spread of mechanisation into "materials handling" (e.g. supermarkets) introduces mechanical rhythms into the distributive sector of the economy.

These changes accentuate, too, the tendencies to the evasion of work which are so characteristic of the American factory worker today. The worker becomes bored, absent-minded, accident-prone, and hostile, or he retreats from reality, engulfed in a myriad of obsessive reveries. The big lure among workers remains the hope of running one's own business, of "being one's own boss." "The possibility of leaving the shop forms a staple topic of conversation on the job," states one observer who worked in a plant. Two California sociologists, Reinhard Bendix and S. M. Lipset, report that "the majority of every occupational category has had the goal of 'going into business' at some time. This aspiration has been even greater among the manual than among the white-collar group. It is our guess," they conclude, "that the creed of the 'individual enterprise' has become by and large a working-class preoccupation. Though it may have animated both working-class and middle-class in the past, it is no longer a middle-class ideal today. Instead, people in the middle-class aspire to become professional and as a second choice, upper-white-collar workers." Of course, few of those who think of it as a goal actually try to go into business "but here again the manual workers report more such effort than the white-collar group."

How realistic are these aspirations? We know that the labour force of the American economy is being transformed. Colin Clark, in his *Conditions of Economic Progress*, long ago pointed out that, as incomes rose and the quantity and quality of goods produced increased, large sections of the economy would shift to service and other "tertiary" occupations. Since 1910, the proportion of farmers, farm owners, and unskilled workers in the labour force has decreased sharply as an aggregate; skilled workers have held their own; service workers have increased slightly; professional persons have moved up by from 4·4 to 7·5, and proprietors and managers from 6·5 to 8·8 per cent of the work force in this period. The largest increases have come in the categories of semi-skilled labour and clerks and sales. The semi-skilled group has increased from 14·7 in 1910 to 22·4 in 1950, the white-collar worker from 10·2 to 20·2.

Followers of Clark, seeking to refine his conceptual scheme, have introduced "quaternary" (communications, finance, transport, commerce) and "quinary" (medical care, education, research, and recreation) industries. Certainly the expansion of the American economy has opened the way for new careers, and the expanding occupations on the whole are located outside the factory. But fascination with these rates of growth should not mislead us into failing to consider the limited number of such positions available, or the question whether, apart from the increase in the number of places, the possibility of "getting ahead" is real or chimerical. In the United States, social mobility is a matter *between* generations—it is the children who may get ahead, in comparison with the father. The father reaches one point and usually rests there. The study of occupational mobility by Bendix and Lipset showed that individuals held an average of 4·8 jobs over a 25-year period. But despite this high degree of circulation, "between those who work with their hands and those who do not, there is, however, relatively little shifting. This is perhaps the most fundamental cleavage in American society. All those who work with their hands have spent 80 per cent of their working lives in manual occupations; all who do not work with their hands have spent 75 per cent of their working lives in non-manual occupations." *

In compensation, there is a considerable—and sometimes pathetic—effort to lift one's occupation by its own bootstraps. The effort

* I am fairly certain that in other countries—England, France, Germany, even Soviet Russia—the division would be even sharper than it is in America.

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to "professionalise" work has become the major means of giving one's job a badge of honorific quality which the nature of the work itself denies. So the garage becomes the "lubritorium," individuals do not say "I am selling skillets" but "I am in selling," the janitor becomes the "superintendent," the hospital superintendent the "administrator," the secretary the "executive assistant," etc.

The most significant form taken by the flight from work is the desperate drive for leisure. The engineer, the executive, and the professional get wholly absorbed in work; the worker saves his energy for his leisure. Edward Bellamy in his *Looking Backward* foresaw a state wherein an individual spent twenty to twenty-five years of his life in a drudging routine for a few hours a day and then was free to pursue his own desires. Here, in the US in mid-twentieth century, in a curious fashion, Bellamy's vision is being realised. The average work week has been reduced from 70·6 hours (1850) to an average of 40·8 (1950). The two-day week-end is now standard in American life and the seven-hour work-day is at the threshold. What workers have been denied in work, they now seek to recapture in leisure. Over the past decade there has been a fantastic mushrooming of arts and crafts hobbies, of photography, home wood-work shops with power-driven tools, ceramics, "hi-fi" (high-fidelity) electronics, radio "hams," etc. America has seen the multiplication of the "amateur" on a scale unknown in previous history. And while this is a positive good, it has been achieved at a high cost indeed—the loss of satisfaction in work.

The Exhaustion of the Left

If work has lost its rationale in the capitalist industrial order, it has failed to find any new meaning under the socialist régimes. One of the most significant sociological facts of recent years, perhaps, is the exhaustion of socialist thought on the European continent and England. Socialists are not wholly at fault for this. The European national economies, so insular and landlocked, are peculiarly dependent upon world trade balances, and the area of manœuvreability is limited; in fact, in the "managerial revolution" which has silently emerged, technical decision-making by the economic expert now shapes the politician's pronouncements. But socialist doctrine is not quite free of responsibility for its present miseries. Socialism was primarily a distributive philosophy. The Manifesto of Marx, the *Finanzkapital* of Hilferding, the Fabian essays of Webb all blithely assumed that the problems of production were solved by capitalism and that the function of socialism was to redistribute the fruits in more equitable fashion. Yet the 19th century problem of capital growth, of incentives and productivity, is very much alive today, and nationalisation *per se* produces few miracles.

Most striking of all, perhaps, is the apathy of workers in nationalised industries and their unwillingness to act as if they "own" the factories (no more so, perhaps, as Michael Polanyi appositely remarks, than British sailors feel they "own" the Royal Navy). The British railroad worker and the British miner fail to shout hallelujah when nationalised boards issue their annual reports. As Austen Albu points out in one of the New Fabian essays, "the problems of human relations which the nationalised industries face are due mainly to the size and complexity of their organisational structures and are faced equally by all organisations of similar size."

But beyond the questions of economics, and the vexing ones of bureaucracy, which socialists have so belatedly begun to confront, there lies a further question of fundamental orientation. Socialism, particularly in the West, has in its view of work been markedly utilitarian. Its concerns have been largely with the market and with efficiency. The humanistic impulses which stemmed from William Morris were soon dissipated. In her essay in the first Fabian volume, on "Industry Under Socialism," Annie Besant (who later became the outstanding spokesman for theosophy) attacked those who would airily build a "new Jerusalem." She argued that "realistically" the organisation of industry under socialism could only be a projection of existing tendencies. The Webbs, too, saw social change as a means to create

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order; their motive was a passion for efficiency. This notion of ending muddle, of the introduction of social discipline, was characteristically part of Lenin's temper as well. It is rather interesting that Lenin was deeply attracted to the work of Frederick Taylor and when faced, near the end of the Civil War, with the task of organising industrial production, his solution, as he outlined it in a notable address in June 1919, was the introduction both of piece work and of Taylorism. "The possibility of Socialism," Lenin wrote, "will be determined by our success in combining Soviet rule and Soviet organisation or management with the latest progressive measures of capitalism. We must introduce in Russia the study and teaching of the Taylor system and its systematic trial and adoption."

Modern socialist thinking has hardly emancipated itself from its heritage of efficiency-thinking. One of the most thoughtful of English Socialists, Austen Albu, worries over the problem in his Fabian essay, already mentioned: if only more could be done with "joint consultation," if only workers could be given a "means of participation in the making of decisions," if only they had "a sense of partnership in, and responsibility for the industry in which they work . . ." etc. etc. But he knows that the "old slogans of industrial democracy or workers control by themselves offer no solution" for large-scale bureaucratic organisations.

If one hopes to provide a new spirit among workers and a new appetite for work, one needs to consider the worker as more than a part of a "human relation" in a factory. His job must not only feed his body: it must sustain his spirit. One of the fascinating discoveries of an American sociological study, *The Man on the Assembly Line*, by Charles Walker and Robert Guest, is the way in which the men, resenting the mechanical harness to which they are hitched, sought to "buck the line," in some small way to introduce variety and assert their own work rhythms. One way was to build "banks," that is, to accumulate a number of sub-assemblies of items; another by "working up the line" very fast and then catching a breather. The most popular jobs in the plant were those of utilitymen, foremen, and repairmen—those least resembling assembly-line jobs. The utilitymen, who act as substitutes for the line men at various times, spoke of getting an idea of the whole line, of meeting and talking with different workers and of knowing all the jobs. "To one unfamiliar with assembly line work experience," remark the authors, "the difference between a job with five operations and a job with ten, or between a job taking two minutes to perform and a job taking four might seem far too trivial . . . [yet] . . . one of the most striking findings of this study is the psychological importance of even minute changes in his immediate job experience." *

The implications of the Walker and Guest study are fairly simple. Since detailed job breakdown becomes socially (and humanly) self-defeating, the answer lies in job rotation, in job "enlargement," in lengthening the work cycle, etc. Whatever the narrow losses this entails from the point of view of time-and-motion study, the gain in workers' satisfaction is beyond counting.

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* It is striking, in reading Marx's description of machinery and modern industry to see how acutely he grasped simple distinctions which have eluded generations of sociologists. His own solution for the deadening effects of machine work was variety. "It becomes a question of life and death for society . . . to replace the detail worker of today, crippled by life-long repetition of one and the same trivial operation, and thus reduced to the mere fragment of a man, by the fully developed individual, fit for a variety of labours, ready to face any change of production, and to whom the different social functions he performs are but so many modes of giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers." And, in a footnote, Marx quotes approvingly, as a model to be emulated, the account of a French workman who tells of his experience in the "new world" of San Francisco: "I was firmly convinced that I was fit for nothing but letterpress printing. . . . Once in the midst of this world of adventurers who change their occupation as often as they do their shirt, egad, I did as the others. As mining did not turn out remunerative enough, I left for the town, where in succession I became a typographer, slater, plumber, etc. In consequence of thus finding out that I am fit for any sort of work I feel less of a mollusk and more of a man."

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No More Work?

All this fretting and worrying and moralising, however, may yet turn out to be academic. For we stand today on the verge of a second industrial revolution. While the assembly line tended to grip the worker bodily to the rhythm of the line, a vast development of electric motors and semi-automatic controls now has created a new situation. The development of the continuous flow has now eliminated the worker almost completely. On its present scale and complexity, the continuous flow innovation dates back only to 1939 when Standard Oil of New Jersey and M. W. Kellog Co. erected the first of the oil industry's great fluid-catalytic crackers. In these new plants, the raw material, fluid or gas, flows continuously in at one end, passes through intricate stages, and debouches in a twenty-four hour stream of products at the other. The whole plant is run from central control rooms, with but a few men at the automatic control instruments, while mobile maintenance crews take care of any breakdowns. The new Ford engine plant in Cleveland, opened in 1952, provides a continuous operation from the original flow of sand and the casting of moulds to the flow of molten iron and the shaking out of fully cast engine blocks, with almost no human hands touching the operation other than to speed the flow of work by checking empty gauges or, from high cranes, lifting the mass of metals. Thus foundry work, the grimiest of tasks, gives way to the machine.

In this second industrial revolution there arises a new concept of work, of man as creator and regulator of delicate and precise machines. Some have hailed this "royal road" of technology as leading to the elimination of the semi-skilled worker and the birth "of a new class of artisans." Others see man as being further reduced in significance, standing completely outside his work, and having no personal relation to it.

In the history of human hopes and longings the polar points of *arcadia* and *utopia* meet at some point in the curving universe. Men have always looked past to some golden age or forward to some golden idyll. Two thousand years ago, Antipater of Thessalonica, a Greek poet of Cicero's day, acclaimed the invention of the water wheel as giving freedom to female slaves who ground the corn: "Cease from grinding . . . sleep late, even if the crowing cocks announce the dawn . . . the Nymphs perform the work of your hands . . . turn the heavy concave Nisyrian millstones." And Aristotle predicted that slavery would disappear when looms would weave by themselves, for then the chief workmen would not need helpers, nor masters slaves. And yet work, said Freud, was the chief means of binding an individual to reality. What will happen when not only the worker but work itself is displaced by the machine?

ERRATUM

We very much regret that in the May issue the fifth stanza of Part I of William Plomer's *Atheling Grange* was transposed with the ninth stanza, and in the third part the sixth stanza was transposed with the eleventh. In the third stanza in the fourth section the word Plutuns should read Plutens.

The Editors are extremely sorry that Mr. Plomer's delightful poem should have been marred by these errors.

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Sylvia Wilson

Easter at Monte Circeo

THERE were lilies in the garden and a hot quiet smell. The place where we ate was half studio and half greenhouse, and as there were window panes all the way round, you could see anyone who passed down the garden and watch the horse and cart arriving from Terracina.

The silver and tablecloths were clean, and the food was delicious. There were many kinds of fish to choose from, and a dark golden mayonnaise lay in a shallow dish. The peas, beans, and artichokes were fresh from the garden and were served with oil. There was a cool white wine. At one table sat an old couple, distinguished and obliterated by their years. A girl arranged wild flowers during her lunch; her skin was white and her hair as black as a crow. She had a squint but it made her no less attractive. Her lover was a thin, long young man who was delighted by her but read instantly whenever he was alone. A strong-minded couple, who looked like Swedes but were not, sat by the window with a woman in a clean cotton blouse and a wide skirt who was going to have a child shortly.

Giovanni, the waiter, at the behest of everyone, scurried about in his black sandshoes, his white jacket getting more and more limp. He was vastly overworked but skilled and agile and always ready to discuss food or to laugh at a sally from the fat man who was the husband of the pregnant young woman. Perhaps at home Giovanni was bitter and bad-tempered, he had something in his eye which suggested it, but he was unsparing in his public life.

There were tubs of dark rose geraniums and stiff vases crammed full of arum lilies and, by a white statue of a child wound in a veil stood an earthenware urn of great red lilies. Some beautiful engravings hung on the wall above our table. Outside the south window panes, over the vine leaves, lay the glistening dark blue sea.

Very much later in the day Edward said to me on the hillside, "You can hear the day ending." And so of course you could. There was a cluckle of hens and the voices of young children coming home through the olive groves, and the whirr and darting of insects. On the side of the hill bright blue larkspur, cherry-coloured gladioli, lady's slipper, yellow ginestra, and the delicate white flower of garlic were growing wild.

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We came upon a barefooted man, and a boy of eight years old carrying a gun. They were both in the tatters of old uniforms. The man had curly hair and a wild sunburnt face. We wished them a Happy Easter. The gun, they told us, was a German one. The man began to talk standing in the brushwood with the sunset behind him. He said he had not been to church for eight years, not since the "Poveretta" had died. Then he and the boy had had to manage on their own. The Padrone from the hotel had wheedled him to work for him with fair promises. Now he got one hundred lire a day and how was he to keep himself and the boy on that? He told us of a Contessa who had lodged at the hotel in the summer and had given the boy some trousers belonging to her child, and let him eat the food that they left. The Padrone at the hotel had not liked it and had forbidden it. But he, Angelo, loved the Contessa with all his heart, and in the night he would cut the grapes and peaches and bring them in the darkness to beneath the Contessa's window. She would weep and say, "Angelo, you must not do this for me." She told the Padrone that when she left she would be paying thousands of lire for her visit and she would give her children's clothes and food to whom she liked or she would leave. The Padrone called him "the wild one" and said, "Little Angelo, Angeluccio, you are free to do what you like and to take the clothes and food that you are given."

Afterwards we said, "What a beautiful place this is," and Angelo said, "Ah yes, Signori, but come in September, come then when the perfume of the grape stretches from here until the sea."

THE next morning, after a long climb, we discovered the village built on the top of a hill. Perhaps because it was Easter Sunday everyone looked happy and most people looked beautiful. There must have been disease and sorrow there, and goodness knows there was poverty on every side, but the grace of the place was such that it was impossible not to be charmed. The houses were on curious levels and each doorway was painted differently. Children scrambled down outside stairways and narrow steps. The elderly women coming from the fountain looked beautiful with their wide, long skirts and their narrow jackets. The men were small, with dark hawklike faces. They wore hard felt hats and stood together in thick groups. The air was alive with salutations, and clean Easter dresses were paraded at every corner.

We sat in the Square on wooden chairs, drinking wine in the sunshine. A man stopped on his big motor bicycle, with his cigarette alight, the burnt paper hanging down a little, and his felt hat firmly on his head. The owner of the wine shop came out from the bead curtains. "Give me something to eat and drink, my friend," said the man on the big motor bicycle. "I am nearly a dead man. I have been to the Mass to communicate myself and the priest did not get to me until now at half-past ten. I did not go to bed until late and I got up at five to go shooting, and imagine me now having had nothing to eat or drink. My friend, give me at once a good coffee."

On the rock in the sunshine I watched the long waves slide forward

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and crash. It seemed that there was stealth and intelligence behind their movement. I could feel Edward's hair blow across my face, and I had a particular tenderness for him that day because he was not feeling very well. I thought, I was going to say how lovely it is to be here, but really what does it matter where we are—Rome, Chelsea, Newcastle, Russia—as long as we go on living life together.

In the night the wind blew and the shutters banged, and I got up to close them. The place was no longer a still spring dream. The moon lay coldly over the sea. The waves were lifting themselves in fierce white tongues. The wind hummed like a drum round the house. Suddenly it was a lonely night when nature cared not a fig for man.

THE day after, lying on the sand, I watched the sea. The brilliance of the sun on the water was what was important, the wet dazzle making the slope of the water glisten. A man, a woman with a box on her head, and three children came along the sands. The little girl was skipping and suddenly I saw not a dog following them but a small black pig. I called to it and obediently in a friendly manner it came up to me, snuffling a little and affectionate as a dog. When they had passed down the sands I shut my eyes and the sea tumbled and crashed continually, sliding, withdrawing and breaking with infinite sameness and change.

We walked back by the footpath through the fields. There was a strong smell of hot plants, and as we passed a garden wall the overwhelming smell of wistaria. Through the gaps on the sand dunes we could see the purple flowers that they called witch's nails; beyond the flowers lay the dark blue sea and the lily-white waves. Lifting your head the light off the sea was white, chalk white, and dazzle. We came upon some fig trees and in an arbour were sitting a man and a woman. The woman wore a white linen cloth round her head and the man had dark skin and a black felt hat. They sat still and silent resting at midday. I thought, that is how marriage should be, two people understanding each other quietly. We said good day and the silence closed again. We made our way thoughtfully down the white sandy lane to the studio-greenhouse to eat our last meal in Monte Circeo.

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Nirad C. Chaudhuri

Passage To and From India

READING *A Passage to India* some time ago, I was led to think not only of the final collective passage of the British from India but also of Mr. Forster's contribution to that finale. Such an association of ideas between a novel and an event of political history may be objected to, but in this case I think the association is legitimate. For *A Passage to India* has possibly been an even greater influence in British imperial politics than in English literature.

From the first, the more active reaction to it followed the existing lines of political cleavage, its admirers being liberal, radical, or leftist sheep and its detractors conservative, imperialist, and diehard goats. The feud between English liberalism and the British empire in India was as old as the empire itself. Except for a short period of quiescence when Liberal-Imperialism was in vogue, it raged till 1947. Mr. Forster's novel became a powerful weapon in the hands of the anti-imperialists, and was made to contribute its share to the disappearance of British rule in India.

On those, also, who did not follow clear party cues in respect of India, its influence was destructive. It alienated their sympathy from the Indian empire. As it was, the British people taken in the mass were never deeply involved in this empire, emotionally or intellectually. To them it was rather a marginal fact of British history than what it really was—a major phenomenon in the history of world civilisation. Mr. Forster's book not only strengthened the indifference, it also created a positive aversion to the empire by its unattractive picture of India and Anglo-Indian life and its depiction of Indo-British relations as being of a kind that were bound to outrage the English sense of decency and fair play. Thus, the novel helped the growth of that mood which enabled the British people to leave India with an almost Pilate-like gesture of washing their hands of a disagreeable affair.

Even intrinsically, the novel had a political drift. There is of course no necessary connection between a writer's own intentions and the manner in which he is accepted or exploited by his public. It has even been said that it is only when they are debased or deformed that philosophical ideas play a part in history. But in regard to *A Passage to India*, it can be said that the author's purpose and the public response more or less coincided. The novel was quite openly a satire on the British official in India. Perhaps in a veiled form it was also a satire on the Indians who were, or aspired to be, the *clientes* of the foreign patriciate. As such it was, at one remove, a verdict on British rule in India. At the risk of depriving it of its nuances, but perhaps not misrepresenting its general purport, I might sum it up as follows. This rule is the cause of such painful maladjustment in simple human relations that even without going deeply into the rights and wrongs of the case it is desirable to put an end to it. The intention seems to have been to bring even English readers to agree with the last outburst of the hero of the novel, Aziz: "We shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea, and then you and I shall be friends."

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ACCORDINGLY, one is almost forced to appraise the novel as a political essay on Indo-British relations, and as soon as it is considered as such, a striking gap in Mr. Forster's presentation of these relations fixes attention. It is seen that the novel wholly ignores the largest area of Indo-British relations and is taken up with a relatively small sector. The ignored area is the one I watched at first hand from the age of seven to the age of fifty. The other sector, in contrast, was known to me only by hearsay, because I feared its contact almost as much as a Pharisee feared the contact of publicans and sinners.

The Indo-British relations I was familiar with were contained, for the most part, within the conflict between Indian nationalists and the British administration. Here I saw great suffering and distress, but also exultation, a brave acceptance of ill-treatment and conquest of weak tears. The longer the men had been in jail, the more they had been persecuted, the more "sporting" they seemed to be. In the other sector, the conflict was between associates, the British officials and their Indian subordinates or hangers-on, and had all the meanness of a family quarrel. It sizzled without providing any ennobling or even chastening release for passion, only distilling rancour. It contributed much to the pathology of Indo-British relations but virtually nothing to the final parting of ways. If we can at all speak of having driven the "blasted Englishman into the sea," as Aziz puts it, it was not men of his type who accomplished the feat. Those who fought British rule in India did not do so with the object of eventually gaining the Englishman's personal friendship. Just as personal humiliation did not bring them into the conflict, personal friendship did not also lure them as a goal.

But of course there was good reason for Mr. Forster's choice. The reason is not however that the political conflict was impersonal and could not be treated in a novel. It could be, though the result would have been a tragedy of mutual repulsion and not a tragi-comedy of mutual attraction. Mr. Forster chose the sector of which he had personal knowledge. As an Englishman paying a short visit to India, he naturally saw far less of Indians in general than of his own countrymen and of the Indians with whom the latter had official business or perfunctory social relations. Being an Englishman, of humane sensibilities, he was also shocked by the state of these relations, as among others Wilfrid Blunt was before him. On the other hand, he could not observe the larger and the more important area without going considerably out of his way and making a special effort.

There is also another and not less fundamental reason for Mr. Forster's choice. That is the character of his political consciousness. I should really call it humanitarian consciousness. For his is an appeal in a political case to the court of humane feelings to what he himself calls "common humanity" in a later essay. Now, the relationship between common humanity and politics is even more complex than that which exists between morality and politics. I firmly believe that ultimately, politics and morals are inseparable; even so, the most obvious moral judgement on a political situation is not necessarily a right judgement, and for humane feelings to go for a straight tilt at politics is even more quixotic than tilting at windmills.

The consequences of pitting humane feelings against a political phenomenon are well illustrated in *A Passage to India*. One consequence is that it leads to pure negation. In the sphere of Indo-British relations the novel has no solution to offer except a dissolution of the relationship, which is not a solution of the problem but only its elimination. The good feeling that such a dissolution can generate, and has in actual fact generated between Indians and the British after 1947, is the sort of kindly feeling one has for strangers or casual acquaintances. It is of no use whatever for a sane ordering of political relations which one is struggling to raise from an amoral or even immoral level to a moral one.

ANOTHER consequence is that the humanitarian prepossession leads Mr. Forster to waste his politico-ethical emotion on persons who do not deserve it. Both the groups of characters in *A Passage to India* are insignificant and despicable. I have, however, my doubts about Mr. Forster's delineation of his countrymen. I am no authority on the life of White

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officials in India, for I never cultivated them. Still, observing them in their public capacity, and at times laying incredible stupidities at their door, I did not consider them quite so absurd a class as Mr. Forster shows them to be.

Of one implied charge I will definitely acquit them. Mr. Forster makes the British officials of Chandrapore nervous about the excitement of the Muharram to the extent of making the women and children take shelter in the club, and after the trial of Aziz he makes them reach home along by-ways for fear of being manhandled by a town rabble. Of this kind of cowardice no British official in India was to my mind ever guilty, even in their worst time since the Mutiny, in the years 1930 to 1932, when the Auxiliary Force armoury at Chittagong in Bengal was raided by a band of young revolutionaries, British officials were shot dead in Calcutta and the districts, and attempts were made on the life of the Governor of Bengal and the Police Commissioner of Calcutta. As a class, the British officials kept their head. The courage shown by the District Magistrate of Chittagong on the night of the raid, when an insurrection of unknown magnitude and danger faced him, was admirable. The shortcoming of the British official was not in courage, but in intelligence.

On the other hand, Mr. Forster is too charitable with the Indians. Aziz would not have been allowed to cross my threshold, not to speak of being taken as an equal. Men of his type are a pest even in free India. Some have acquired a crude idea of gracious living or have merely been caught by the lure of snobbism, and are always trying to gain importance by sneaking into the company of those to whom this way of living is natural. Another group of men are more hardboiled. They are always out to put personal friendship to worldly profit, perhaps the most widespread canker in Indian social life even now. Indian ministers and high officials feel this even more strongly than Ronny in Mr. Forster's novel. These attempts at exploitation are making them more outrageously rude than any British official, and all the more so because in India there is no tradition of kindliness among people in power. In British days this bickering gave rise to a corrosive race conflict, now it is fomenting an equally corrosive class conflict. But it is futile to grow censorious over this, no sane or satisfactory human relations can be built up with such material.

Mr. Forster appears to have felt this himself. He is too intelligent to be able to overlook the weak points in the Indian character, and too honest to suppress them in his book. Indeed, he shows himself so acute in seizing them that it is impossible to imagine that he was representing Aziz and his associates as fine fellows who deserved to be treated as equals by the British, and was not conscious of their utter worthlessness. I detect a personal admission in the comment he puts in the mouth of Ronny about the Nawab Bahadur, the "show Indian": "Incredible, aren't they, even the best of them?" So I am not surprised to find a streak of satire even in his presentation of Indians. But such satire not being his aim, he is driven into a corner, from where he can plead for satisfactory Indo-British relations on the only basis which could be proof against disillusionment, the basis of the least respect and the largest charity. Inevitably he has also to make a moralist's impossible demand on human nature.

But even if Mr. Forster's Indians had been good as individuals as they are malodorous, he would not have had a very much stronger case. For he had not chosen his Indian types happily. In regard to the Hindu characters, he relied mostly on the types found in the Princely States. Certainly they were more traditional than those in British India, but they were so traditional that they did not represent modern India at all. For instance, to those of us who are familiar with the teachings of the Hindu reformers of the 19th century, Godbole is not an exponent of Hinduism, he is a clown. Even for us, friendly personal relations with these men became possible only if we assumed we were in an anthropological reserve. Although the States have now been incorporated in India, the unevenness persists, and it presents a serious problem of *Gleichschaltung* for the future.

But Mr. Forster's more serious mistake was in taking Muslims as the principal characters in a novel dealing with Indo-British relations. They should never have been the second party

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to the relationship in the novel, because ever since the nationalist movement got into its stride the Muslims were playing a curiously equivocal role, realistic and effective politically, but unsatisfying in every other respect. The Muslims hated the British with a hatred even more vitriolic than the Hindu's, because it was they who had been deprived of an empire by the British. Yet they found themselves wooed by the latter as a counterpoise to the Hindu nationalists, and they did not reject these overtures.

They were shrewd in their calculations. They knew that their own battle was being fought by the Hindus and that in an eventual victory their share of the spoils was guaranteed. In the meanwhile, it was profitable to exploit the British, make the best of both worlds. This game, played with boldness and hardheaded realism, succeeded beyond expectation and created an independent state for the Muslims of India.

But a colossal Machiavellian game of politics like this could be played without moral risks only by men of very great strength of character, as indeed all the Muslim leaders, from Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan to M. A. Jinnah, were. On the rank and file of the Muslims, so far as this policy influenced them, it had a deplorable effect. It left one section unweaned from its barren and rancorous hatred and made another pine for British patronage. Aziz and his friends belong to the servile section and are all inverted toadies. With such material, a searching history of the Muslim destiny in India could have been written, but not a novel on Indo-British relations, for which it was essential to have a Hindu protagonist.

But I think I know why Mr. Forster would not have a Hindu. He shares the liking the British in India had for the Muslim, and the corresponding dislike for the Hindu. This was a curious psychological paradox and in every way unnatural, if not perverse. On the one hand, the Islamic order was the natural enemy of the Christian-European, and the British empire in India was in one sense the product of the secular conflict between the Christian West and the Islamic Middle East, which is still running its course. More than one British Foreign Secretary found the pitch of British policy queered by the incurable phil-Islamic attitude of the British Indian Government, and once Sir Edward Grey expressed frank annoyance at it.

On the other hand, there was between European civilisation and the Hindu in its stricter form a common Indo-European element, which was discovered and described by British Orientalists in the first century or so of British rule, but which came to be forgotten and ignored by Englishmen in later times. Modern Hindu thinkers did not, however, lose sight of the affinity. Swami Vivekananda, speaking at the end of the last century, said that two branches of the same people placed in different surroundings in Greece and India had worked out the problems of life, each in its own particular way, but that through the agency of the British people the ancient Greek was meeting the ancient Hindu on Indian soil, and thus "slowly and silently the leaven has come, the broadening out, the life-giving revivalist movement that we see all around us." The British in India never gave this fruitful idea any encouragement. They were taken in by the deceptive simplicity of the Muslim and repelled by the apparent bizarrerie of Hinduism and its rococo excrescences. I wonder if it was the Hebraic element in the British ethos which was responsible for this.

THIS leads me straight to my objections to the politics of *A Passage to India* and my one positive comment on its central theme. My most serious criticisms are the following. It shows a great imperial system at its worst, not as diabolically evil but as drab and asinine; the rulers and the ruled alike are depicted at their smallest, the snobbery and pettiness of the one matching the imbecility and rancour of the other. Our suffering under British rule, on which a book as noble as Alfred de Vigny's *Servitude et Grandeur militaires* could have been written, is deprived of all dignity. Our mental life as depicted in the book is painfully childish and querulous. Lastly, attention is diverted away from those Indians who stood aloof from the world the book describes and were aristocratic in their way, although possessing no

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outward attribute of aristocracy. When I consider all this I feel Mr. Forster's literary ability, which has given the book its political importance, as a grievance.

At the root of all this lies the book's tacit but confident assumption that Indo-British relations presented a problem of personal behaviour and could be tackled on the personal plane. They did not and could not. The great Indians who brought about the Westernisation of their country and created its modern culture had none of the characteristic Indian foibles for which Mr. Forster invokes British compassion. They were men of the stature of an Erasmus, Comenius, or Holberg, who could hold their own with the best in Europe. Yet some of them were assaulted, some insulted, and others slighted by the local British. None of them had any intimate personal relations with any member of the British ruling community. There were also thousands of Indians who had adopted Western ideals and were following them to the best of their ability, who were not only not cultivated but shunned with blatant ostentation by the British in India. "What you have got to stamp on is these educated classes," they all said, like the subaltern in the novel. This was due, not to any personal snobbery, but to that massive national snobbery which refused to share British and Western civilisation with Indians.

Those who remember the powerful championship of Westernisation by Macaulay usually forget that his best supporters were Indians and his most determined opponents his own countrymen. In spite of the formal adoption of this policy, the British ruling class in India never felt happy about it and carried it out half-heartedly. Towards the result, the attitude of the thoughtful Englishman was one of regret, while the average Englishman grew maliciously quizzical.

To give only one example, there was hardly one Englishman who had a good word to say about our employment of the English language. I still remember the pleasure I felt when for the first time in my experience, I read praise of our English in Sir Michael Sadler's report on Calcutta University. Normally the better our English the more angry did the Englishman become, and the worse it was the greater was the entertainment of the Memsahib and *ergo* the larger the favours of the Sahib. Even so great a personage as Lady Minto was not above the weakness, and in his kindly manner even Mr. Forster has felt amused by our English.

Of course, I cannot deny that much of our English as indeed much of our Westernisation was quaint. But ours were the shortcomings of self-taught and unguided men everywhere. If, in their days of power, the British had not looked askance at our employment of English, today the battle for English in India would not have been already lost, and we should not have needed the forlorn crusade of the British Council, too late for love, too late for joy, too late, too late!

ONCE the premise of cultural apartheid was admitted, there could be no advance on the personal plane, for men do not treat as equals those who are not of their psychological species. The British in India clinging to the obsolete idea of zoological speciation for mankind, could only cry as the District Collector does in *A Passage to India*: "I have never known anything but disaster result when English people and Indians attempt to be intimate socially. Intercourse, yes. Courtesy by all means. Intimacy—never, never."

A real Englishman, greater than Mr. Forster's Turton, had come to the same conclusion. Sir Edwin Lutyens, the builder of New Delhi, tried friendship with Indians and wrote in disenchantment: "The natives do not improve on acquaintance. Their very low intellects spoil much and I do not think it is possible for the Indians and Whites to mix freely and naturally. They are very different, and even my ultra-wide sympathy with them cannot admit them on the same plane as myself. They may be on a higher plane or a lower one than a White, but the ethics of their planes are different to ours, and for one or the other to leave his plane is unclean and unforgivable."

On the other hand, putting the cultural impact in the foreground, Indians propounded a strikingly contrasted thesis. At that level our personal humiliations ceased to matter and even our great *injuria temporum*, political subjection,

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presented a second face. Rammohun Roy was grossly insulted by a British baronet and official. He protested against it to the Governor-General but did not allow it to influence his views on Westernisation or even those about British rule in India. He surprised a young French scientist, Victor Jacquemont, who saw him in Calcutta, by an expression of opinion which the Frenchman set down verbatim in his journal: "*La conquête est bien rarement un mal, quand le peuple conquérant est plus civilisé que le peuple conquis, parce qu'elle apporte à celui-ci les biens de la civilisation. Il faut à l'Inde bien des années de domination anglaise pour qu'elle puisse ne pas perdre beaucoup en ressaisissant son indépendance politique.*"

Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the creator of Hindu nationalism, was actually assaulted by a British official though a magistrate himself, but he too, when it came to assessing the larger consequences of British rule in India, argued persuasively that it was in many ways providential. Personal grievance, even when well-founded, did not influence men of this type.

The contrast between the generosity of such Indians and the British narrowness furnishes the key to the real failure of the British in India. It was the failure to see that a nation which was not willing to propagate its civilisation and extend its spiritual citizenship was also incapable of perpetuating, not only an empire, but even friendly political relations with other nations not belonging to its own culture complex. The challenge before the British was to create an open society in the order of the mind. Their opportunity was to make India an extension of the Western world. But they failed as completely in using their opportunity as they did in meeting the challenge. Compared with this failure, which was a betrayal of the West in India, their bad manners were mere peccadillos.

THIS political evaluation of *A Passage to India* has not been attempted for its historical interest, great as that interest is. I believe that the questions which British rule raised in India have only been put aside and not answered by what happened in 1947. I also believe that the British failure to understand the true nature of the Indo-British relationship has a moral, whose application is likely to widen as time passes, for a new set of international relations taking shape today over an area very much larger than India. It is this moral that I have to draw now.

But as a preliminary I should define my position. I represent no school of thought in India, past or present, and there is nothing characteristically Indian in my views except the fact that they are those of an Indian by birth and are based on Indian experience. I differ fundamentally from the nationalistic majority of my countrymen who speak of 19th century imperialism but forget that the century also had its nationalism. I differ no less fundamentally from the influential minority in India who believe in world government, who pin their faith to a world government of the contractual type, carried on by means of a world assembly in which the national representatives will be wise, reasonable, and just. I cannot say, like a Christian, that this conception is bound to be wrecked on the innate sinfulness of man, but I would say that it would hurtle against man's inherent urge to power.

It seems to me that the West is now showing the same incomprehension which destroyed British power in India. The economic and the political impact of the West is being felt. What is absent is that proselytising cultural impact which alone can counteract the mental resistance to the extension of Western culture into the non-Western parts of the world. Instead, there is the same uncritical faith in the promotion of economic prosperity and the converting power of *Pecunia Americana* as there was in the maintenance of law and order and the indispensability of *Pax Britannica*. The West ought to, and in my opinion can, think in terms of something higher than effective diplomacy, higher even than world government, for converting the single zoological species called man into one psychological species. Of course, that might not be possible. But one can never speak of impossibility before an effort has been made.

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David Wright

A Voyage to Africa

TO MY WIFE

La vraie terre natale est celle où on a eu sa première émotion forte.—Rémy de Gourmont

I

ADAMASTOR, whom Camoens and the sea
Invented, was a giant who, we are told,
With Achilles' future mother wished to lie,
But met with a fool's mate colder than the snows
To become a seamark over Table Bay

Because the young lady turned him into stone.
You, my dear Adamastor, I invoke
(A myth, but the first immigrant European)
To come out from under your white tablecloth
And, if you like, to bless the following poem.

Your outlook, bony and magnificent, leans
Upon waves fanning toward the deader pole,
The irreconcilable and married oceans,
With a real authority, superb and full,
With visions of a continent of penguins.

On your right, like gods or angels in a play,
Some Portuguese seamen, followed by some Dutch,
With sails and guns made their romantic entry
(But read Buffon upon female Hottentots)
And thus began South African history;

While on your left, or sinister, side there sleep
The bones of Dingaan's brother, and of Dingaan—
May their siesta prove unpleasant, and not light,
That nothing may discommode the present plan
Of many blacks labouring to make a white.

I, who left England upon St. Lucy's day
And longest night, am undertaking to tell
In verses of a voyage to Africa;
And you, Adamastor, although somewhat dull
And deaf, must help to sustain me if I fly;

For I, born in fields you turn your back upon,
Lying between Sahara and Cape Aguilhas,
May legitimately claim to be your son.
You'd have preferred the fathering of Achilles—
Acquiesce in your destiny of a stone!

As quiet has been my fortune and your gift,
We should collaborate. Let me now begin.
At Northampton, in a High School for the Deaf,
I was reading about Adonais, when
A whole Europe was engaged in peace,

Seesawing like a hesitant suicide
Before the act. O world of my adolescence
Not altogether entitled to regard,
But less completely black than the midwinter's
Night at Tilbury when I waited for the tide

And the hemispheres that now keep war on ice
Lay asleep, folded in a total gloom
As Thames, bearing down his comment to a rise
Of waters from a deep and shallow ocean,
Carried what fell so easily from my eyes.

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That slumbering island with some stars disposed
Possessed me. While the river, seaborne, moved
Lost in a night's profoundest and longest shade,
On either side of the water slept or grieved
Those that made and loved me that I loved and made.

So, loving island, towering west and north,
She encompassed with sad massive arms my sleeping.
What is a man's birthplace? Where the man came forth.
Not where his embryo, dangerously leaping,
Arrives naked at an accidental hearth.

In no other way I acknowledged my home
Than by knowing her immense, and as a bride
Exhausted and fulfilled, when at her groin
I lay that night near and distant to her side
And left her in darkness to embark alone.

Beginning with a vision of division
Morning broke shrouded in gunmetal mist.
The sea, frog-throated, duffled its horizon;
Rehearsing, our engines trembled, paused, and stopped.
Vessels make an impression as a prison

And some may have been built to that image.
Mine, with cargo of importance and exile
Making a contemporary pilgrimage,
Hygiene, cash, defeat of boredom, being goal,
Voyaged through fog first, whooping like a savage

Across the Bay of Biscay to discover
The hills of Finisterre for Christmas morning.
A preparatory jostle from the weather
Set iron girders and the engines grinding
As wind bounced bareback upon rearing withers,

The ocean a welter. Europe lay to port
And guttered in sunrise, while the storm, half blown,
Dragging its rage in flickering rags, trailed out
Its gales into the morning that Christ was born
And lost, in an irritable sea, my boat.

The apparition of Europe seemed final
When sea, with many lolling sky-coloured tongues
Circled the ship, my centre, with no landfall
To sever the reiterated horizons.
My vessel, chained to the zeroes like a ball,

Bobbed in a dandled basin of the doldrums
As approaching constellations, white and black,
Paid out their cable over the altered rim
Of heaven reflected in a sparking wake,
To modulate, night by night, its gaudy rooms

Till from the blue long barrows of the ocean
Emerged a purple and undelectable
Monolith, whose volcanic origin
Lends denial and a countenance to fable:
A mountain drawing thunderclouds and seamen.

Gabled and dun, where lie your woods, St. Helena?
Where, island, do you support your oranges?
You that carry goats and men, but trees no longer,
Sing through the surges that those losing changes
Arrived with João da Nova Castella.

Midway to after and before, you, between
Africa, Europe, and the Americas,
Appear an omphalos, Janus-eyed island.
Can you recall a mutilated Portuguese,
Lopez? Does anything of the man remain

Among depilated hills? I felt your sea-gong
Everywhere in a multiple of valleys
Re-utter syllables, perhaps his name,
A misanthrope and a farmer of sorrows.
"Fernando, Fernando," may be the sermon

That breezes fumbling over the clinker steer
To gnawn dingles, stagnant and as brown as oil;
"A one-fisted renegade without an ear,
Fernando Lopez, first inmate of exile,
Inhabited with an absolution here."

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We, the visitants, the immigrants, and those
Who, fed with the familiar, demand the same
In new environs, but at a lower price,
Thus wandering down a groove, always become
At a point of a voyage, or of our lives,

Aware we are looking back no longer to
Where we have come from, but must begin to plan
Arrival at those places to which we go—
As you, stark island, who marry European
To African dilapidation, seem to do.

For can flinging rope rings into tubs grow stale?
When the last land gull had abandoned our wake,
We, undisturbed by a bird or dolphin-school,
Exercised ourselves as usual upon deck
And daily dropped more grommets in the pail.

Now the sea had assembled over St. Helena
And our mainmast, that spiked night and Orion
Who, exhaling, wore Betelgeux as a star,
Had bisected the great southern constellation,
Turbines and boredom groaned towards a shore

Which, a superb thunder over Table Bay
Behind whose colours much ground, much of trouble,
Lies for who come, and for my fathers lay
Smiling upon the daylight of arrival,
Appeared indifferently out of Africa.

II

To come to a natal place and different faces
As a revenant, corrupted and aware,
Having weathered adolescence and voyages;
Thus to revisit a native city, where
Exiguous views equate the open spaces,

Questions have both answers, either black or white,
Where nothing adds up except, perhaps, the bill—
Shake, hero! Hero? Every man is that.
It resembles, since it is, descent to hell,
Therefore let the treatment of that theme be light.

Since no persons and no places understand
Anyone so well, or with so many lies,
As those environs in which his life began,
There to return is not to be pleased, nor please,
Where each unpleasable ghost turns into man,

You Perseus with the embarrassing head!
Who ever could be a prophet in his own—?
Hero, when paying a visit to your dead,
There's no shadow to be seen then, except one,
Who dogs the alive disturber with its pad.

A cowardice and a courage brought me here,
Those elements that compel us to decide
Justly upon the choices that never were.
We make our destinies. Our destinies hide.
We create them who resist and yield to our

Natures, and who to allow or disallow
The evil and the good, depend on grace,
On what includes a farthing and a sparrow.
The holy gamble of the heavenly race
Betting against a certainty of sorrow.

When upon a Sunday morning I once more
Set foot upon what, to prohibit cross
Purposes, I term my natal not native shore,
European, literate, without a police
Record, and as officially free as air,

The sunlight beat like shades of a prison-house.
Those who restrict a liberty, restrict
The lot. Liberty is anonymous;
When invisible and general she exists,
As each undomesticated creature knows.

I was given reliable advice.
"In this country do as we do, as in Rome."
I took that counsel but disliked my place
Set among discomfort earmarked European;
Yet discovered such arrangements were first-class

After an Europe spent in travelling third.
Abandoned by beasts and blackened by the light,
Veld careering under carriage wheels reverbed
The thousand hills and the length of day to night,
The drought and thunder to Johannesburg.

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Pillars of salt about you, human city,
Glister against a blue and fortunate air.
We must love the impositions that you levy,
So deep to extend them, mother and vampire!
Bestower and subtractor of our vanity

Who thus, gridironed with concrete and wire,
Turns to the sky a naked disastrous face
Acknowledging the error of a power
That, one Eden, rigged her labyrinthine base
Deeper than gold, than her last galleries lower.

Here I was born. And here, like asparagus,
The small aspirations claw a higher sky
With commodities of an unchanged progress
Towards the exhaustion of the means to die.
Black, here, is the actual colour of distress:

Black as an adder to fear and to comfort.
The great American saloon cars blast by
Illustrious. As the summer ends the drought,
Summer its pandemonium gathers high
In purple cumuli over Magaliesberg.

An immaterial default will not perturb
Above undermining and minotaur caverns
The city which, without centre but a suburb,
Dishonoured by the distances and heavens,
Apparently proliferates and prospers.

By day the rocks, inhuman, flash from their hill
Or sweat with rain above this mortifying
City which I must inhabit; these appal;
O human city in a wilderness lying,
Holy about you night and lightning fall.

Here I was born, and here I am come back
To meet the consolation that she provides.
That glittering white sierra, where neglect
Perpetuates an empire which she denies,
Swans on the silent border of a lake

Where thunder hangs, and so surrounds and threatens
With an accusation of rejected dust.
Let not rejection be a consolation.
Lose but not loose me, and I am not lost
To glory on the mines of desolation

That, thrown up by a Witwatersrand, outlie
The city where I was born, Johannesburg,
Balanced between the plateaux of a sky
And the deep ground; miserable as superb,
Common as divine, and like humanity.

Where by Orange Grove mimosas are cut down
And some orchards fallen to the building plots,
I abide by what proves to be not my home
Part of this journey. Let Moselekatse
Nek notched to the Magaliesberg mountain plume

Keep tally if I hear the goldfinches call
Above green cedar branches upon whose trees
I felt, first, a purgatorial silence fall,
Second, the consolation that always is
That all is well and shall console us all.

III

How gentle, courteous, and noble is nature
Whose beasts, when visible, appear dumb and good,
And whose prospects, munificent but pure;
Or she is cruel if that should be the mood,
May be dressed in or divested of allure.

A mirror more perfect than any of glass
She is: when looked in, the looker sees a shape
Of his emotion, and of what really was
There, looking in; of an angel or an ape.
If her mountains lean towards beguiling us—

In whom, once, we saw a visage of our fright,
Though long ago, and in another country,
Whereas today they flatter us with their height—
O nature, mirror or mishandled pantry,
Or medicine, goddess, enemy, what you like—

I love you, and knowing whom I really love
I find it difficult not to love you more;
Either in a city's confines, at one remove,
Or when I, travelling past in train or car,
Touch the innocence your wildernesses prove.

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As for the human spectators there on show
(Whose stink of worry, effectively overcome
By a scent of steel and petrol, does not now
Terrify to a stampede the herds of horn)
Become beasts by virtue of machines, they go

By Sabi in the Kruger National Park
Where the lions, mewing from Pretorius Kop,
And light-bummed impala, poised as a photo-
graph,
Live easy as in an Eden, have no hope,
Content with joy infects with joy their dark.

Cropping under rocks depending for their fall,
Sunlit, the prelapsarian creatures move:
In their incommunicable selfish toil
They praise what made them with no need to
love
Or ever to manifest that praise at all,

As we are led, by what I am now aware
Is guilt of loving not enough, to beg pardon,
Embarrassed by overmuch of love and care
And so excluded from the encircling garden,
In learning and in the laud of what moves there.

The hairy and stupid beasts that have no
troubles
Beyond rinderpest and acts of God, increase.
A hippo, lulled by water, is snoring bubbles
While lion beside the zebra loll at peace;
Scavenging from heaven, an aasvogel wobbles;
And intelligent babooneries alone
Who peer from behind their thrones of
boulders, pierce
The simple human disguise of a machine,
Avoiding the direction of eyes and ears
And of a curiosity like their own

Where, virginal, without a memory, or
Regret, and balancing like a week's wash
Her clouds of summer over what cause affords,
The thorn-appointed veld unlids that face
The kraals of Umgungundhlovu rose towards,

But with not easily felt neutrality
Wields the indifference of a regard
That, deafer than a wilderness or the sky,
Seems yet to have seen where each black beast
and guard
Makes shift, at night, in secret, towards its day.

About to fly of a midnight to England
I half turn, affected as a lover, while
Exiled I quit what seems a native ground,
Engage, already exiled, on an exile
With a half mad Europe to my northern hand;

Which to inherit, flying far and over
Johannesburg—above whose black defiles
The street lamps burn as I again remember
(O delectable in dark, luminous under hills)
That every farewell is in fact for ever—

A leaning plane's wing lifts me swiftly further.
In her long gown of evening she drags away,
And far lights flutter to a broad tiara.
Obscure, below, prodigious, and gothic, lie
The expanses galloping to a grand Sahara.

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W. H. Auden

Streams

(For Elizabeth Drew)

DEAR water, clear water, playful in all your streams,
As you dash or loiter through life who does not love
To sit beside you, to hear you and see you,
Pure being, perfect in music and movement?

Air is boastful at times, earth slovenly, fire rude,
But you in your bearing are always immaculate,
The most well-spoken of all the older
Servants in the household of Mrs. Nature.

No one suspects you of mocking him, for you still
Use the same vocables you were using the day
Before that unexpected row which
Downed every hod on half-finished Babel,

And still talk to yourself: nowhere are you disliked;
Arching your torso, you dive from a basalt sill,
Canter across white chalk, slog forward
Through red marls, the aboriginal pilgrim,

At home in all sections, but for whom we should be
Idolaters of a single rock, kept apart
By our landscapes, excluding as alien
The tales and diets of all other strata.

How could we love the absent one if you did not keep
Coming from a distance, or quite directly assist,
As when past Iseult's tower you floated
The willow pash-notes of wanted Tristram?

And Homo Ludens, surely, is your child, who make
Fun of our feuds by opposing identical banks,
Transferring the loam from Huppim
To Muppim and back each time you crankle.

Growth cannot add to your song: as unchristened brooks
Already you whisper to ants what, as Brahma's son,
Descending his titanic staircase
Into Assam, to Himalayan bears you thunder.

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And not even man can spoil you: his company
Coarsens roses and dogs but, should he herd you through a sluice
To toil at a turbine, or keep you
Leaping in gardens for his amusement,

Innocent still is your outcry, water, and there
Even, to his soiled heart raging at what it is,
Tells of a sort of world, quite other,
Altogether different from this one

With its envies and passports, a polis like that
To which, in the name of scholars everywhere,
Gaston Paris pledged his allegiance
As Bismarck's siege-guns came within earshot.

Lately, in that dale of all Yorkshire's the loveliest,
Where, off its fell-side helter-skelter, Kisdon Beck
Jumps into Swale with a boyish shouting,
Sprawled out on grass, I dozed for a second,

And found myself following a croquet tournament
In a calm enclosure, with thrushes popular:
Of all the players in that cool valley
The best with the mallet was my darling.

While, on the wolds that begirdled it, wild old men
Hunted with spades and hammers, monomaniac each,
For a megalith or a fossil,
And bird-watchers stalked the mossy beech-woods.

Suddenly, over the lawn we started to run
For, lo, through the trees in a cream and golden coach
Drawn by two baby locomotives,
The god of mortal doting approached us,

Flanked by his bodyguard, those hairy armigers in green
Who laugh at thunderstorms and weep at a blue sky:
He thanked us for our cheers of homage,
And promised X and Y a passion undying.

With a wave of his torch he commanded a dance;
So round in a ring we flew, my dear on my right,
When I awoke. But fortunate seemed that
Day because of my dream and enlightened,

And dearer, water, than ever your voice, as if
Glad—though goodness knows why—to run with the human race,
Wishing, I thought, the least of men their
Figures of splendour, their holy places.

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Iain Fletcher

Baroque Organ in a Northern Church

THOSE wooden Cupids at the organ's tips,
Playful imagos of the Judgement round,
Their shoulders with the breaking wingbuds crowned,
Whose slender trumpets purfling up their lips
Seem the strained antennæ of sound,

Came once from Italy; some Roman staged
Their flight across a great cathedral void,
Where Frescobaldi's famous fingers raged
Along the manuals, but here they heard
The cooler beauty of our English Byrd.

Once Venus' spores, the laughing stairs of light,
Forced marriage between Paradise and Earth;
And made believe a column's gilded height
Could rupture Heaven by one violent flight
And bring the crouching nebulæ to birth.

Now like the natural shapes we find in caves,
Born sadly from great fractures of the world,
And formed as water, and as rock, behaves,
Where downward-groping arches pierce old graves
They wait in smothered light with bat wings furled.

My mind's three centuries of argument,
Like a page fingered by a listless wind,
Lose sequence, though stars climb to no event,
And God being absent such undisciplined
Winged boys may idle in bewilderment.

Dust and the dying stone have hazed their eyes;
But when through organ spires rumours of music rise,
The nave's dark firmament mutters above,
Remembering or prophesying, they surprise
Our endless Judgement, those lamed imps of Love.

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George Barker

A Song of the Sea

AND if I love you
What's that to you?
You'll love someone else
And I know who.

And if you love me
What's that to me?
My heart's up the river
And I'm at sea.

If we love one another
All day and all night,
O the liar's the one with
His eye so bright.

For the face that you truly
Love for ever
Is the face that you see when
You look in the river.

And the one who loves me most
Under the sky
Is the one with the green and
Familiar eye.

And so O my only
My lonely love,
We will love one another
As long as we live.

But the world is so wide
And the heart so small
It's a wonder that people
Can love at all.

Down in the deep ground
Bisexuals squirm
In a love that comes easy
When you're a worm.

But the smoke like a ghost
Rises up from the stack
And no wind O no wind
Can gather it back.

For if I love you
What's that to you?
I look in a mirror
And only see you.

And if you love me,
What's that to me?
You look in a glass and
It's me that you see.

Wild horses are tearing
The whole world apart
So we can see that
It's got no heart.

By water and willow
I'll sit down and weep
For the star that can never
Fall softly asleep

But hears in its dreams
The blues of the sea:
"And if you love me,
What's that to me?"

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Vernon Watkins

Ode

TRUTH is simple: out of the mouths of babes
Flows the living word to correct the proud.
All great acts are serene and
Born in the bands of acknowledged glory.

Ugly and ignorant voices have compelled
Countries to hear; eloquent men have sown
Misery with their gestures.
Covetous men are afraid of silence.

So, when these islands faced a tyrannous power,
Death approached in the air; towns, churches fell;
Seas rendered up their victims;
Noble and innocent souls were martyred.

Tragedy once was dignified by the dance.
Life could overturn fate, an heroic tongue,
Still refusing betrayal,
Feel in the dark the accord of angels.

Joy is woven true on a tragic base.
They who feel, where they stand, the worshipping dead,
Seek for all words responses
Deep, and attuned to a heavenly music.

Chargers pranced. The procession children enjoyed
Held in check what none might entirely know,
Mist of their wakened mornings
Changing all they had dreamed to wonder.

Then caparisoned horses mounted moved
Down the historic streets to the city's heart.
Then did heraldic London
Seal one day for the summoned ages.

Watchful gargoyles brooded while listening ears
Hearkened to echoes of war in stirrups and hooves.
Doves wheeling high above them,
Lighting, restored preservation's murmur.

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God's true fear, the rebuke of power, attended
Her the trumpets proclaimed and the moment crowned
Throned by the Thames, just past this
Century's noon, in the midst of Summer.

Then, as the mantle fell and the crown was lowered,
Set with emeralds, rubies and precious stones,
Minstrels bade the anointed
Keep, like the morning star, her stillness.

Still, to the just who wait at the end of time,
All then passing is constant in their gaze.
All our intent is sacred;
All that was early is judged, is measured.

Huw Menai

The Old Thorn Tree on our Hillside

Look at me (it says)—I am an old thorn tree on the hillside.
I net the stars as if they were minnows in a crystal pool.
I hear the wind screech in my ears (I can hear it now!)
But I shall turn it round my fingers as it strives to blow me down.
I am mute, but I know all things. I see and hear the world
As it tumbles around me. I stand between several pathways,
And everything that moves on earth, from man to sexton beetle,
Passes by me sometime or other. I can hear the thinking of the human
Before it is mouthed in words. The frost festoons me in great celebration,
And the fragrant blossoms of Spring with their jewels of dew
Come to tangle my hair and make my old heart for a moment
Leap with the Joy of it. Birds home in cozy crooks of my arms, while
Butterflies touch me lightly; and waves of bees come buzzing when I bloom
Or linger about me until sometimes they become too heady from a surfeit of nectar
To find a steady way home to the hive. The sun and I are great friends,
He has no meaning but for me, and I no meaning but for him.
My roots worm down deep to the centre of the Earth—and beyond.
And I have enough thorns on me to adorn any crucified head
That may chance along. I live with shadows. I muse with ghosts,
And I'm not afraid. I am one with the central nerve of Creation.
No secret can be hidden from me. I can penetrate the walls of each heart
And know the joy or the pain or the yearning or the guilt harboured therein.
Note the wonder of me—gnarled by storms, and grub-ridden as I am—
No mere stone symbol but the living Sphinx, sap-fed and bristling with leaves
Which take unresistingly what the wind gives. My roots are wide.
I have much offspring, but I (O bleak identity!) I, myself, shall
Wither and fade—run down to my parent roots, dissolve there and become one
Again with the eternal source of all things—the Overshadowing Essence,
The Everlasting Ghost!

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David Lougée

A Sestina for Cynthia

You whom the waters make fierce and the moon quiets,
In whose white body's body I read an owlish tale
And to whose sacred wood I sent a houndsman riding,
Receive what I have built in the night's quarry;
See, as in a mirror, what I have always known;
Trace the flesh's wonder in its changing image.

It was as crying sea-gales carved your image
That green birds came, as when a cool wind quiets
Bothered sleep, and spelled out what I had not known
Before, how lightest birds can buff a weather's tale
And hold back winter from a blackened quarry,
Though on the coldest waters they are riding.

And wild in the wet wood, tuned to a houndsman's riding
And a bird's cry steady mounting, I traced the image
In your tussled hair, and in my dark stone quarry,
And caught the raging spell no rude mouth quiets
And found that of your name is knelled the water's tale.
So do bells relate what chimed rock has known.

Harking to those bells, a red-capped prince has known
The wonder of a princess, prim and coy; and of her riding
In the hidden wood. Hearing loud the flail-winds' tale,
Marking long those hills where blows your image
And called to by a houndsman whom no hard night quiets,
That anxious prince strayed past my silent quarry.

Held in that constant season, autumn round my quarry,
I sought what chiselled note a princess would have known;
Told the carrying wind how a grave surge quiets,
Let ring the lasting vision of those light birds riding.
And saw as my reply the rock-sprung curling of your image
Through bending grasses where began the wild tale.

And waters leapt to that reply, mirroring the tale
Knelled in the waves' top reaches; and joyous in my quarry,
There rose in utter bloom the white blaze of your image,
Spread through swelling light what a worn wood had known,
Fast before the houndsman the proud prince riding
Seeking straight that clamour which a soft rain quiets.

You whose smile quiets night and the knelling tale,
To whom a high prince riding and the poet in his quarry
Bow, know what love has known, this shifting image.

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Mark Alexander

New Directions in Soviet Literature?

SOMETIME during the second half of 1954, probably in early autumn, the all-Union Congress of Soviet writers is to convene in Moscow. It will be no common event. There has been only one previous national writers' congress, and that was twenty years ago; the keynote speech was then given by a comparatively unknown Party leader, one Andrey Zhdanov. Seen in retrospect, the first Soviet Writers Congress of 1934 was a turning point, and some observers believe that the forthcoming meeting will be of at least equal importance and will perhaps signify the introduction of "a new course" in Soviet literature.

There can be little doubt that there have been some stirrings on the Soviet literary scene during recent months. First Ilya Ehrenbourg, in October 1953, called for a return to the *status quo ante* 1939, as far as restrictions and controls on Soviet writers were concerned. Ehrenbourg has always enjoyed a certain *Narrenfreiheit* and it would have been unwise to take him alone as a touchstone. However, since then, a considerable number of literary critics have repeated his call, although in a lower key, while several poems, short stories, and full length novels have been published which simply could not have passed muster three, five, or even ten years ago.

Writers are no longer exclusively preoccupied with the idealisation of their "positive heroes" and of prevailing conditions, and dare to touch certain problems and issues which had been "out of bounds" even before the straitjacket imposed by the late Andrey Zhdanov. Critics now ridicule the stereotype of the tractor driver who, on the eve of marriage, coos to his beloved how he is going to repair the inventory of the Machine Tractor Station; or of the miner who exclaims: "I wish my days of leave were already over so that I could return to my work down in the pits." Mrs. Vera Panova in her recent novel *The Seasons of the Year* (the publication of which was delayed, it appears, for several years) graphically describes the harrowing results of the lack of housing space in an industrial centre. About a third of her main figures are certainly not "positive heroes" as demanded by yesterday's critics, and many are simply crooks. Her novel is by far the most interesting, and probably the most realistic, work of art to come out of Russia for many a year. Another good specimen is Valentin Ovetchkin's *District Workdays*, which concerns itself with matters about which one critic says that "some writers hitherto did not see them and the others were silent because they thought that they were a matter to be dealt with by the highest authorities." It is an attack against what has come to be called, during the last year, *Borsovtchina*, the dictatorial manner of the local Party secretaries. Such criticism has, it is true, been voiced occasionally before. But hitherto such behaviour has been explained as a remnant of the capitalist-bourgeois way of life, while it is now realised that the real reason may be far more complicated and that such things may not be "remnants" at all, but on the contrary the concomitant of a new Soviet way of life. This

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at least is the conclusion drawn by a critic in *Znamya*, and he should know.

There are many more examples, and the question inevitably arises as to what these changes amount to under present conditions. There are, needless to mention, fairly narrow limits to the new "liberalism," and it is not yet clear, moreover, whether we face a transient phenomenon or a permanent change. It would appear from various articles and official repartees that the "liberal trend" in Soviet literature had reached a sort of high water mark in late autumn or early winter 1953, that afterwards a retrograde movement set in and that the spring of 1954 brought a second wave of "liberalism," though considerably less far-reaching than the earlier one. But we can best reach a true estimate by tracing the various lines of development in Soviet writing from their point of intersection—Stalin's death, about one year and a half ago.

Late in March 1953, Alexander Fadeyev, General Secretary of the Union of Soviet writers for a number of years and its "representative" on the Central Committee of the Party, published in *Literaturnaya Gasetta* a *tour d'horizon* reviewing the main problems facing his fellow writers. Stalin had been dead for three weeks, but the Jewish physicians had not yet been released from prison, nor could it yet be known what political changes, if any, would follow his death. It was an atmosphere of suspense and uncertainty, and Fadeyev's report saw manifold ideological dangers.* "Formalism," i.e. all writing without clear political content, had been liquidated, but the struggle against "bourgeois nationalism" and "cosmopolitanism" was still going on. Vassili Grossman (*For the Right Cause*) had described "altogether untypical heroes" in his recent book on Stalingrad and the Second World War. E. Kazakevitch (*The Heart of the Friend*), a Stalin prizewinner, had appeared as a proponent of the harmful and utterly reactionary "pythagorean theory" that society and men were not in a process of continual progress but were moving in a circle.

The "pythagorean philosophy of history," as interpreted in Russia, is worth a comment. Time and again, Soviet writers have been accused of being influenced by the "infamous, decadent, reactionary theory of the cyclic repetition of periods and phenomena and of the movement of mankind, not forwards, but in a cycle." It all goes back to a play of Vassili Grossman, appropriately named *If To Believe the Pythagoreans* and published in *Znamya* in July 1946. The plot is simple enough. Shatavskoi, a former Tsarist officer, an expert in ballistics, draws the lessons of his life: once upon a time he opposed the October revolution: now he had become a conscious and valuable Soviet citizen, doing his share for the construction of the country. But when he looks at the world: how little indeed has changed since pre-1917 times! The same bureaucrats who rejected his important inventions then, are rejecting them now. Everything is as it was: "The same thoughts and problems, the same disputes and the same idle talking. The eternal rebirth of the dreams of youth—and the death of these dreams."

One can imagine how the critics reacted. But it did not deter other Soviet citizens from giving expression, though in a more guarded manner, to their doubts regarding the automatic progress which, according to the Fourth Law of Leninist dialectics, they should have been witnessing in their daily life. This in turn raises a central issue: the absence of tragedy in Soviet literature.

I have been able to discover only three books (apart from a few shorter pieces) written since the Second World War which do not have a happy ending. Yuri Hermann's *Lieutenant Colonel of the Medical Service*, Knorre's *An Ordinary Story*, and *Ivan Ivanovitch* by Antonina Koptayeva. The two former have been severely criticised, the third, which does not end on such an outspokenly pessimistic note, has not. During the war there obviously had to be dead and wounded, but even then any overdoing of the description of

* There was a strong anti-Jewish undertone in Fadeyev's report, in line with the political events of November 1952–March 1953. It was certainly no mere coincidence that the majority of the "deviators" he mentioned were Jews.

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the squalor and misery of war was frowned upon. There is no room for tragedy in Soviet letters because there is no tragedy recognised in Soviet life. There may be death, illness, suffering, misery of the individual—but the life of the individual is so unimportant in comparison with society and its great tasks, that the suffering of the individual cannot in itself really be considered a tragedy. Tragedy can exist only under the capitalist régime, where the sacrifices and suffering of the individual are in vain (unless they are experienced within the framework of the Communist Party). In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, all efforts are by definition directed towards the building of a Communist society; even if the individual fails or dies, the collectivity attains its target: here the individual achieves his fulfilment—*Der Einzelne ist nichts, die Gemeinschaft ist alles.*

All Soviet conflicts are "non-antagonistic," i.e. based on a misunderstanding or maladjustment. This pseudo-conflict, as presented in hundreds of plays and novels, conforms to a simple formula, thus:

Comrade Petrov, the type of the innovator, introduces an improvement in the process of work in his factory (or office or collective farm). Comrade Ivanov, his superior (typifying the conservative bureaucrat), opposes the innovation. Two factions come into existence but Comrade Petrov stands his ground. Eventually an even higher comrade from the centre arrives as the *deus ex machina*, vindicating Comrade Petrov and his progressive labour-saving device, while Comrade Ivanov takes a solemn vow to better his ways in the future, or is purged as a saboteur. This plot, which can be complicated (love) and retarded (spy angle —Ivanov becomes an outright saboteur) is indeed to be found in most Soviet plays and novels. It is sometimes really surprising how much ingenuity has been spent to adapt the same scheme to the microbiologists of Moscow, the fishermen of Astrakhan, or the cotton growers of Usbekistan—but it has been done, *mirabile dictu.*

The state of satire and comedy has been, if possible, even worse. There is little scope for humour in the totalitarian state, or for satire in state-licensed comedy. Ilf and Petrov died in time,* Mikhail Zoshenko was less fortunate. One might poke fun, of course, at some harmless lower bureaucrat but one would have to find out in advance if his superiors agreed, and that involved a lot of trouble. There were one or two passable comedies in the classical manner (à la *Minna von Barnhelm* or *She Stoops To Conquer*) notably Korneychuk's *Kalinovaya Rosha* applying the above Petrov–Ivanov formula to a Ukrainian kolkhoz with some success.

For an outsider, the only really funny writer is Nikolai Shpanov, but his fun is involuntary. Shpanov has created the Soviet equivalent of Lanny Budd. His *Warmongers* (930 pages) and *Conspirators* (799 pages) are a history of our times in which everybody from Hitler to Stalin appears. There are surprises for the student of contemporary affairs on literally every page: the detailed description of the prepared assassination of Franklin D. Roosevelt by Messrs. John Foster Dulles, Edgar Hoover, and William Bullitt is one of the mildest of the shocks he is going to receive. It is a matter of regret that Shpanov, who is a unique phenomenon even in the Soviet Union, has not been translated into other languages.

No tragedies, no comedies, no real conflicts —what is left? The astonishing thing is that comparatively much remains: one should not underrate the ingenuity and adaptability of the creative genius of Soviet writers. "Soviet realism," after all, means nothing but following the Party line, and the Party line does not always apply with equal strength to all fields. Whoever is going to write a book on life in America or on Soviet state or Party affairs will not be able to stray very far or leave much to poetic imagination. But there are many routes for escapism. Children's literature has flourished for instance. Soviet writers have been concerned mainly in recent years with the eight to twelve year olds (which permitted

* A state publishing house which reprinted Ilf and Petrov in 1949 was sharply rebuked. There was no longer any room for *that* sense of humour. A highly emaciated Zoshenko reappeared in *Krokodil* early this year.

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them to avoid entering politics), while twenty or thirty years ago the revolutionary fervour of the fourteen to eighteen year olds was much more in fashion. Some of the best Soviet writers and poets have written for and about children, and as a result Soviet literature, in this field at least, is equal if not superior to most that has been written in the West. Another favourite route of escapism is the historical novel, which for this very reason has not been encouraged of late. Still, there have been a number of remarkable if not exactly great books on Stenka Rasin and Bogdan Hmelnitzki, on the Russia of Peter the First and on 1812. More significant is the flight to the outlying regions of the Soviet Union: it is probably no accident that the most successful novel of the post-war period is entitled *Far from Moscow*. Sometimes the impression has been gained that there was a veritable mass migration of Soviet writers from the stuffy atmosphere of Moscow and Leningrad to Kamchatka, Turkmenistan, and even to the territory of the Chuktchen in the Polar circle. This "exotic literature" is of undoubted interest. The plot might be primitive and the literary skills crude, but still one is frequently impressed by the buoyant spirit and the fresh wind which blows apparently much stronger "Far from Moscow." There have also been a number of interesting books on Soviet students (Yuri Trifonov's *Students*, *Three in Grey Coats*, and half a dozen others).

Another curious observation to be made is that the most moving books in recent years, perhaps the only ones which will endure, have been written by women. There are Vera Panova's war and post-war stories, Galina Nikolayeva's *Harvest*, Antonina Koptayeva's *Ivan Ivanovitch* (about a physician among the Yakuts), and a few other authors and books. The literary functionaries such as Simonov write much slicker prose than these women writers who sometimes do not even master the elements of literary technique. But their books have what Simonov and his colleagues cannot attain: an innate honesty—the characters *live* because their emotions and reactions are sincere. Nikolayeva's *Harvest* starts with a soldier, believed missing, returning from the war and finding another man in bed with his wife. Such a situation had not been tackled by any other Soviet writer in years.*

DURING the first weeks and months after Stalin's death there were few changes. The writers and poets were waiting for what the critics had to say, and the critics waited for the Central Committee. Ideology, as Marx teaches us, generally lags behind the material basis of society. A lead of sorts had been given by a few remarks of Malenkov at the 19th Party Congress on what is "typical" (or should be) in art, and of course by the insistence on the principle of collective leadership. An immediate result was that Stalin was much less quoted, and the very system of preparing scientific studies by complementing one hundred pages of quotations from the classics on Marxism-Leninism with one hundred pages of paraphrase was denounced, *expressis verbis*, in *Bolshevik*. Most criticism published since then, up to the most recent remarks of Ehrenbourg, are nothing but elaborations of Malenkov's remark of October 1952, plus some of the other long-established tenets of "Soviet realism." "The art of Soviet society cannot be naturalistic. . . . Naturalism is contemplative and retrospective. Naturalism is the æsthetic incarnation of objectivism" said Asmus in *Novi Mir* (August 1953), which was only another way of explaining Malenkov's remark about the "typical": 95 per cent of the collective farms in Russia today might be poor and inefficient and only 5 per cent well fed and well run—but the 95 per cent are untypical and the 5 per cent typical because in "a few years" from now all, or most, collective farms will be prosperous. As Asmus goes on to say: "Soviet realism is incompatible with lack of ideas, and a copying of that which strikes the eye. It puts into first place the typical features of what is to be described, and might therefore

* Among the many studies on Soviet affairs there has been so far unfortunately not a single one dealing with the Party line on sex in Soviet society, arts, and literature. Attention has been drawn to certain striking parallels with Victorian England but the more obvious comparison is Nazi Germany, and the apparent compulsion felt by rulers of a totalitarian state to "liquidate" sex as a problem.

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change the natural proportions of the subject-matter." Nor have there been striking changes *vis-à-vis* the literature of non-Communist countries, except that the anti-cosmopolitan campaign has somewhat weakened, and the anniversary (in August) of the Zhdanov decrees of 1946 has been celebrated with much less enthusiasm than in previous years.

The first signs of a change came with the speeches at the meeting of the Soviet Writers Executive late in October 1953 and the publication of Ehrenbourg's article. The importance of this article has probably been somewhat exaggerated in the West. The very narrow limits of the new spirit of liberalism were revealed in Konstantin Simonov's speech at the meeting of the Writers Executive. It is true that, quoting Stalin, he declared that more realism was needed in literature and that an end should be put to "iconography"; that he condemned the "new manner of escapism," and demanded that the many conflicts which still existed in Soviet society, and which for some time would continue to exist, should find their reflection in novels and plays and perhaps even verse. However, on this decisive point, Simonov hesitated to draw the obvious conclusions and it must be doubted therefore whether all his other remarks will be of any considerable value to his colleagues: he repeated the old refrain that the existing conflicts were between the "Old" and the "New," the latter according to Soviet ideology symbolising always the better, more progressive, higher phase of development. This indeed is one of the fundamentals of Soviet ideology, and it seems certain that no way out of the present impasse can be found if this basic fallacy of qualitative progress, which flatly contradicts Soviet reality, is not dropped. Up to now, there is no sign that this will be done, and Simonov's appeal to his fellow writers (which incidentally has not been followed up) "to stand up against unwarranted interference with his creative freedom" is about as helpful as Stalin's appeal to initiate free academic discussion in Soviet science, in the summer of 1950. The idea to liberalise Soviet cultural life after all is not new, but the difficulty was then, and is now, how to do it in a totalitarian state. Such a development would be possible only as the result of a very considerable retreat in both Soviet ideology and practice which, one suspects, will never come about as the result of its having been "planned."

Creative writing, for obvious reasons, lagged behind literary criticism in reflecting the new situation. It takes time to write a book even on order, and for technical reasons alone one could not expect major surprises in the big four Soviet literary magazines immediately after Stalin's death. The outstanding work hitherto is Mrs. Panova's novel already mentioned, describing life and conditions in an industrial centre in South Eastern Russia. Her main hero is a very lightminded youngster (to put it mildly) who changes both jobs and girl friends every four months and becomes eventually involved with a gang of thieves, incendiaries, and murderers. The good, needless to say, prevails in the end, but one cannot remember a Soviet novel which dared to suggest that there could be thirty criminals in the Soviet Union, let alone in one novel.

The poets too have adapted themselves to the times. In the Comsomol bi-weekly, of all places, we read the verses of a young poet on his first (and unsuccessful) love affair which caused him to get bad marks in school for some time. Lev Oshanin, a better known poet, tells the readers of *Soviet Woman* about the happy life in store for a young couple day-dreaming on the shores of a sea—and he does not so much as mention Party meetings and studying the "Short Course." Similar unpolitical verse may be found in the popular weeklies and monthlies, and to a lesser extent in the more "highbrow" literary journals where the old Party line poetry still prevails.

Literary historians and translators, too, have been affected. One could refer to a volume containing a number of Shakespeare's plays translated by Boris Pasternak, perhaps the greatest living Russian poet, who had all but disappeared from the literary scene after Zhdanov's attack against him, the "typical formalist." A foreign diplomat who spent the winter of 1953–54 in Moscow has reported that new editions of the works of such poets as Alexander Blok and Yessenin, who had been

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in disfavour for many years and were finally banned by Zhdanov, are again published and sold in the bookshops, and there are even public lectures on Yessenin. (This diplomat reports further that someone put an exclamation mark after the written announcement on the blackboard at Moscow University.)

WHAT, then, may we expect of the forthcoming Soviet writers' Congress? The first, in August 1934, was an event of great importance. It put an end to the separate existence of different literary cliques and to the paramount position of "proletarian experimenting," it introduced the patriotic motif into Soviet literature, and eventually brought about totalitarian regimentation, thought control, *Gleichschaltung*. Is there now to be a New Deal for Soviet writers? Has the pendulum swung back full circle? We do not know yet and there is a distinct probability that the organisers do not know themselves. What can be established with a certain measure of certainty is that Malenkov appears to have a less close interest in literature and the arts than the late Andrey Zhdanov, and relies more on the judgement of advisers. Zhdanov was not the stupid, bureaucratic bully, as he is sometimes described in the West: the misfortune of Soviet culture was that he had some knowledge, taste, and cultural ambitions and that he tried to impose them, with disastrous results, on all writers, painters, and musicians. Malenkov appears to prefer remote control. The new Party line in agriculture will be tackled soon by Soviet writers, so will the principle of "collective leadership." There is to be less hero-worship, and the "masses" will be given more credit. Malenkov's mannerisms are already copied by Soviet writers—especially his aversion to "citatomania" and his indifference to theoretical and ideological problems in general.

The present state in Soviet literature is therefore one of suspense. Everybody is waiting for the coming Congress and the new directives. It is not even clear whether this state of suspense is something planned or is simply the outcome of the preoccupation of the Politburo with more important issues. Obviously Ehrenbourg and Simonov would never have dared to voice such very nearly revolutionary demands without prior encouragement by somebody fairly high up in the Party hierarchy. The old Stalinist school of writing (headed by Alexander Fadeyev, the secretary of the Writers Union) is still going strong and might yet prevail over the Simonovs and Ehrenbourgs, who may find themselves branded as dangerous deviators. But Messrs. Simonov and Ehrenbourg, whatever their literary demerits, have an extraordinary, frequently uncanny knack of divining the intentions of the Politburo—surely they would not have exposed themselves without sufficient backing?

What we have at the present time is neither more nor less than a return to the state of affairs which prevailed prior to Zhdanov's decrees in 1946. There were unpolitical stories and poems then, too; Yessenin and Blok were included in the anthologies, and the more extreme attacks against "formalism" and "cosmopolitanism" had not yet started. But can a "New Deal" for Soviet writers be contained within these very modest limits? The little freedom, or rather the promise of freedom, in recent months will surely whet appetites, and strengthen the demand for a much larger relaxation of controls and the abolition of regimentation. Can the authorities give in to such demands, which may eventually undermine the ideological pillars of the régime?

Answers to questions such as these will have to be given by the Party leaders, not by the Soviet writers. It is an affair of state, not of literature. One sympathises with the Soviet writers, whose lot has not been an enviable one despite the elevated social status and remunerations far exceeding anything in the West. Many, perhaps most of them, would probably gladly forgo Stalin prizes and tens of thousands of roubles of royalties (with a maximum of 13 per cent income tax!) for some fresh air, and there can be but little doubt that all are secretly ashamed of the state of glorified servitude they have been kept in so long. They have deserved better than they got, but how things will develop in the future does not now depend on them.

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Kathleen Raine

Who Made the Tyger?

THAT grand incantation of rhetorical questions that makes up the substance of Blake's most famous poem may have seemed to us, as children, to require no answer. Coleridge's observation that poetry gives most pleasure when only generally and not perfectly understood seems to be true of those questions that stir in us the sense of a living mystery, and while seeming to make some grand affirmation about it, in fact makes none for readers who approach the poem with an open mind. Everyday monotheism seems to demand, as the answer to the final question,

Did he who made the Lamb, make thee?

the answer "Yes," but leaves us then in extreme doubt about the moral character of that God which must, one is bound to conclude, be very different from the all-righteous all-wise all-loving, "good" god of Christianity.

Perhaps we may simplify our question by answering—or asking—another: who made the Lamb?—Lamb, it is to be noticed, spelt with a capital, which signifies that Blake uses the word in its symbolic sense, and includes in his meaning the Lamb of God, as well as the lamb of the meadows, companion of the child of the *Songs of Innocence*. The lamb is a symbol of the principle in nature that willingly dies in order that others may live, the act that Blake in later poems calls "self-annihilation"; while the tiger is the beast that sustains its own life at the expense of its fellow-creatures, symbol of the opposite principle, that of selfhood. Other references to tigers in Blake make it clear that this, and not enthusiasm for a king of the jungle,* is the sense in which Blake uses the word. In *The Four Zoas*, a song of triumph in praise of the natural creation he declares that "the Human Form is no more," and expands this statement in the line "The Tyger fierce laughs at the Human form." The tigers and lions created by Urizen are called "dishumanised men," and belong to his world of separate entities, of whose creatures Blake writes, "beyond the bounds of their own self their senses cannot penetrate." The tiger is, for Blake, a symbol of competitive, predacious selfhood. The lamb belongs to the selfless world of innocence—Eden; the tiger to the selfish world of experience. Did the same god create both worlds?

So naïve is the poet's answer to the question asked in "The Lamb"—"Little Lamb, who made thee?"—that, but for the self-forgetful purity of speech and thought, the poem might seem to have been written by a devout simpleton.

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee:
He is called by thy name,
For He calls himself a Lamb,

* Nevertheless the grandeur of the poem does suggest some such emotion of admiration for the tiger, and I have wondered what tiger had aroused in Blake that dark enthusiasm. Could he have seen Stubbs' *Tiger*, exhibited at the Society of Artists of Great Britain in the year 1769, when the poet was twelve years old? Or, in 1776, *Tigers at Play* by the same artist? The fire of the eyes in Stubbs' magnificent painting that struck Landseer might well have left a lasting impression on a boy, himself an artist to be.

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He is meek, and he is mild;
He became a little child.
I a child, and thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb, God bless thee!
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

Setting aside any hasty impulse to reject the poem as sentimentally childish in its affirmation that Jesus made the lamb, let it be noted that Blake is making a specific theological statement: that the Lamb and the child are made by God the Son who became incarnate as Jesus, by the second person of the Trinity.

Now *The Tyger* was plainly not written by a devout simpleton, for it asks the deepest of all questions—what is the origin of evil. "What! Shall we receive Good at the hand of God and shall we not also receive Evil?" This great theme of the Book of Job preoccupied Blake from the beginning of his life to the end; and already when he wrote *The Tyger* he had the answer to his question: There is an evil creative principle at work in the universe, and this Being is the creator of the natural world. Blake said this, in so many words, to Wordsworth's friend, Crabb Robinson, who reports the conversation in his diary:

> The eloquent descriptions of Nature in Wordsworth's poems were conclusive proofs of atheism, for whoever believes in Nature says B. disbelieves in God—for Nature is the work of the Devil. On my obtaining from him the declaration that the Bible was the word of God, I referred to the commencement of *Genesis*—"In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth." But I gained nothing by this for I was triumphantly told that this God was not Jehovah, but the Elohim, and the doctrine of the Gnostics repeated with sufficient consistency to silence one so unlearned as myself.

So Crabb Robinson concludes with the self-assurance of the man who knows, at least, the answer to so simple a question as "who created the world."

To Blake the question appeared less simple. Nevertheless Crabb-Robinson has not misrepresented him, for in *Jerusalem* Blake writes that "in the chaotic state of sleep" into which Albion, the universal man, is fallen, "Satan and Adam and the whole world was created by the Elohim"; and, still more explicitly, he elsewhere wrote, "Thinking as I do that the Creator of this world is a very cruel Being, and being a worshipper of Christ, I cannot help saying, the Son 'Oh how unlike the Father!' First God Almighty comes with a thump on the head, and then Jesus Christ comes with a balm to heal it."

WHAT was the source of Blake's belief that the world was created by the Elohim (a plural form, it should be noted), "a very cruel Being"? What could he have known of Gnosticism to arouse in him so strong an assent? Such fragments as have been discovered of the 2nd and 3rd century Gnostics were not available to Blake. The Book of the Great Logos was, indeed, brought back to England by James Bruce * during Blake's lifetime, but remained unpublished. The little that was known of the Gnostics was contained in the few facts reported of them by their enemies and detractors on the side of ecclesiastical orthodoxy; and Blake's knowledge of their beliefs could only have reached him at second hand—more exactly, at third hand—through the writings of Lardner, and Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, † published in English translation in the year 1765. Mosheim's account is tendentious, well seasoned with invective against the degeneracy, superstition, and folly of the Gnostics; but he does give a fair and coherent account of their principal beliefs. Chief of these—and common to all schools of Gnosticism—is the affirmation that the creator of this world was a being different from the supreme God; this view was held in common by oriental and Egyptian Gnostics, and by the early Jewish Cabbalists—Cabbalism is often called Jewish Gnosticism. According to the latter, the God of the Old Testament is this lesser divinity, and his dominion over the human race is to be destroyed by the Messiah. Those Gnostics who adopted Christianity believed that Christ, son of the supreme God, came to end the power of the inferior deity. Yet the creator has his origin in the supreme God; he descended from

* 1730–94. Traveller and explorer of the sources of the Nile. He also brought back the Ethiopian text of the *Book of Enoch*.

† Professor Denis Saurat suggests this source.

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the pleroma (the eternal world of the supreme God)

> either by a fortuitous impulse, or in consequence of a divine commission, reduced to order this unseemly mass [matter], adorned it with a rich variety of gifts, created man, and inferior animals of different kinds to store it with inhabitants, and corrected its malignity by mixing with it a certain portion of light, and also of a matter celestial and divine. This creator of the world is distinguished from the supreme deity by the name of demiurge. His character is a compound of shining qualities, and insupportable arrogance; and his excessive lust of empire effaces his talents and his virtues. He claims dominion over the new world he has formed, as his sovereign right; and, excluding totally the supreme deity from all concernment in it, he demands from mankind, for himself and his associates, divine honours. . . . The imperious demiurge exerts his power in opposition to the merciful purpose of the supreme being, resists the influence of those solemn invitations by which he exhorts mankind to return to him, and labours to efface the knowledge of God in the minds of intelligent beings . . . [Mosheim].

This striking characterisation of the demiurge may very well be a source of Blake's "prince of Light," Urizen, who "descends," for no specified reason, from his place in eternity, in order to create a temporal world, his "horrible chaos of futurity." Mosheim makes it clear, moreover, that this demiurge was identified by Jewish Gnostics of the second century A.D., with the God of the Old Testament, the Creator of the Book of Genesis. Cerinthus, a Jew converted to Christian Gnosticism, for example, taught that

> the creator of this world [whom he considered also as the sovereign and lawgiver of the Jewish people], was a being endowed with the greatest virtues, and derived his birth from the Supreme God; that this being fell, by degrees, from his native virtue, and his primitive dignity; that the Supreme God, in consequence of this, determined to destroy his empire, and sent upon earth, for this purpose, one of the ever-happy and glorious æons, whose name was Christ.

In such statements, Mosheim is perfectly just to the beliefs of the Gnostics; and if we suppose that Blake read him with a predisposition to agree with the Gnostics—to read white where Mosheim wrote black, which, after all, was a habit of the poet—it is I suppose conceivable that he might have reconstructed for himself a working framework of 2nd century Gnostic thought. But whence came such a predisposition? Why did Blake read Mosheim at all? I believe that he already knew something of Gnosticism from a source more living, more imaginatively inspiring than the erudite pedantry of Mosheim; and turned to the *Ecclesiastical History* only to find out all he could about a view of the world that he already shared.

CABBALISM had never ceased to exert a profound and fertilising influence on European thought, through the alchemical tradition. The view that the Creation was the work of a demiurge was so usual among alchemists as to be virtually an official doctrine. Paracelsus, for instance, whose works Blake himself says that he had read with profound admiration, writes of the "mortal God" who is the author of evil:

> So the things created are divided into *eternall* and *mortall*; the reason whereof is, because there was another creator of the mysteries, besides the chiefest and most high. For the most high [Creator] ought to be the judge and corrector of all the creatures, who should know how much was bestowed on them, whereby they might do either good or evil, though they had it not [immediately] from him. Moreover, the creatures are always egged on and provoked rather to evill, compelled thereto by the fates, stars, and by the infernal one; which by no means could have bin, if they had proceeded out of the most high himself, that we should be forced into those properties of good and evill, but should in all things have had free will, without any such violent instigation; yet nevertheless the creature hath not so much wisdom as to know good or evill, to understand the eternall or the mortall. . . . And the reason is plain, for such creatures as we are, whose Masters teach us no perfect good, but are rather seasoned by the mortall God who had some power in the *great mystery*, yet are they ordained by the Eternall for judgment both to themselves and us.

Another source known to Blake differs from all others, for it is a genuine Gnostic text of great antiquity, *The Divine Pymander*, attributed to Hermes himself, the half-legendary master of the Alchemists. G. R. S. Meade, in his three-volume work on Thrice Greatest Hermes, states it as his view that *The Divine Pymander* is a pre-Christian work, and non-Jewish, stemming, in fact, from the still living tradition of the Egyptian mystery religion. As religious literature, it is worthy of comparison with the

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finest books of the Hebrew Old Testament, or with those of any other religious tradition. During the 17th century, this book went through many editions on the Continent; and Dr. Everard's English translation is a very fine one. Berkeley quotes the *Pymander* at some length, as a recognised authority, in his *Siris*. This may be where Blake first learned of the book; his marginalia to *Siris* were written many years later, but this is no proof that he had not read, or at least dipped into, *Siris* much earlier and it is certain that he had read other works of Berkeley before 1793; but the *Pymander* was, most likely, widely read during the 18th century among platonists and esotericists. This book may have been the original source of Blake's enthusiasm for Gnosticism; beyond question, it was the inspiration and source of *The Tyger*.

IN an eloquent hymn, Thrice Greatest Hermes, supposed king and priest of Egypt, asks the great question, Who was the creator of man and of the world? and is answered by the Pymander, his divine instructor, or daimon:

> But whence, quoth I, or whereof are the Elements of Nature made?
>
> *Pymander:* Of the Will and Council of God; which, taking the Word, and beholding the beautiful World (in the archetype thereof) initiated it, and so made this World, by the principles and vital Seeds or Soul-like productions of itself.
>
> For the *Mind* being God, Male and Female, Life and Light, brought forth this Word; another *Minde, the Workman*, which being God of the Fire, and the Spirit, fashioned and formed seven other Governors, which in their circle, contain the Sensible World, whose Government or Disposition is called Fate or Destiny. The Seven Governors are the planetary spirits that govern this world; and the workman, Minde, together with the Word, containing the Circles, and whirling them about, turned round as a wheel his own workmanships, and suffered them to be turned from an indefinite beginning to an undeterminable end, for they always begin where they end.

Mosheim also mentions the Gnostic belief that there are "seven angelic architects" engaged on the creation and government of the sublunary world. The Cabbala likewise has this septenary, the seven lower Sefiroth of the Tree of God; and even in Christian mythology, the Holy Spirit is a sevenfold creative power. Together with the seven, the "workman mind" makes eight in all; in Cabbalism, the eighth is the Elohim Ruach, the God of the Old Testament, third of the higher Sefiroth under whose government the seven lower potencies operate in the created world. Blake also has his ogdoad—the Four Zoas and their four feminine emanations—with Urizen as the creator of the fallen world, the God of the Old Testament.

The Divine Pymander describes the creation of man by this second "Workman mind," the God of the Fire, and of the Spirit, that emanates from the Mind of God:

> And if thou wilt see and behold this workman, even by mortal things that are upon the earth, and in the deep, consider, O Son, how man is made and framed in the womb. . . . Who circumscribed and marked out his eyes? Who bored his nostrils and ears? Who opened his mouth, who stretched out and tied together his sinews? Who channelled the veins? Who hardened and made strong the bones? Who clothed the flesh with skin? Who divided the fingers and the joynts? Who flattened and made broad the soles of the feet? Who digged the pores? Who stretched out the spleen? Who made the heart like a Pyramis?

To me it seems beyond doubt that this passage inspired *The Tyger*. Compare the very phrases—"the fire of thine eyes"—who better than the god of fire himself "dare seize the fire?" Compare: "*. . . what art Could twist the sinews of thy heart,*" with "who stretched out and tied together his sinews?" The veins, the bones, the entrails, and, finally, "who flattened and made broad the soles of the feet," so imaginatively transmuted by Blake into the "*dread feet*" of the Tyger. If Blake had seen a living tiger, the flat, broad, powerful paws must have struck him; they are particularly striking in the Stubbs painting, supposing that to be his source. In the first draft of the poem, he had written, "*what dread hand made thy dread feet,*" then, confusing hands and feet, he makes a quadruped, and in the line "*what dread hand and what dread feet*" leaves us in doubt whether either, or both, belong to the maker, or the made. Finally, the series of

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questions asked by the *Pymander* is taken over as the rhetorical pattern of *The Tyger*.

A later poem, "To Tirzah," refers still, I think, to the same passage—the succession of "nostrils, eyes and ears" strongly suggests it:

> *Thou, Mother of my Mortal part,*
> *With cruelty didst mould my Heart,*
> *And with false self-deceiving fears*
> *Didst bind my Nostrils, Eyes & Ears:*
> *Didst close my Tongue in senseless clay,*
> *And me to Mortal Life betray.*

In this poem Blake makes clear the point left in doubt in *The Tyger* that he regards the incarnation of man as an evil.

THE "workman mind," then, that made the tiger, is the demiurge of the Gnostics, the presiding-spirit of destiny, who revolves on his wheel without beginning or end the mutable creatures of nature, subject to fate. "Whatsoever is in Heaven is alterable," writes Hermes, "All upon Earth is alterable. . . . That which is immortal is not mortal. That which is mortal, is not immortal. . . . That which is mortal, cometh not into a body immortal, but that which is immortal cometh into that which is mortal." The *Tyger* is a wonder and terror of mortal creation, the work of the being called by Paracelsus, the "mortal god."

It is not only in this unmistakable textual parallel that the Workman Mind of *The Divine Pymander* seems to me to correspond exactly with Blake's conception of the creator of this world; but also in the grandeur and ambiguity of the character of the demiurge himself. Is he good or is he evil, this mighty workman? Is he working the will of the supreme God, or his own only? Thrice Greatest Hermes leaves us in the same state of sublime doubt as does Blake's poem. The "workman mind" is not the supreme God, but neither is he in any way like the Christian devil; there is the grandeur of intelligence in his works, and his creation is, in some sense, by the permission of the Eternal, and, according to Hermes, his work of creation accomplished, he at last returns to the *Pleroma* whence he emanated. There is not, in *The Divine Pymander*, the uncompromising dualism of good and evil found in Christianity; rather, as in the Judaic mystical thought of the Cabbala, evil as well as good has its origin in the *deus absconditus*.* The Devil of the Book of Job is God's servant and son; and among the Ten Sefiroth of the Tree of God, there are potencies of evil as well as of good. So, in Blake's own Prophetic Books, the fallen demiurge returns, the Circle of Destiny fulfilled, to his place within the eternal Divine Humanity. The creator of the *Tyger* is not the Christian God, but neither is he the Christian devil.

In the Prophetic Books, the character of Urizen is developed rather from Cabbalistic sources than from Gnostic—he is Elohim Ruach, the God of the Old Testament. But "Elohim" is a plural, and all the four Zoas are "of the Elohim," as Blake states explicitly of Los, and implicitly of Luvah, and are all creators of the temporal world, in some aspect. Supremacy in this creative process is contested between Urizen, the fallen mind, and Los, the Prophet of Eternity, the visionary faculty. Urizen's creation is, on the whole, responsible for the fall from the eternal into the temporal world; while Los labours to create and to destroy the forms of life, toiling to bring about a return to the eternal world, to realise, in time and space, the birth of the Supreme God as Jesus, the Divine Humanity. I find in the character of Los some characteristics of the "workman mind" of the *Pymander*. Demiurge means "workman," as Blake probably knew; and it is Los, not Urizen, who fulfils that role in Blake's myth. Los, above all a workman, and, moreover, a metal worker, is a toiler at the "furnaces," a god of fire, for ever fashioning and forming with hammer and bellows, like the Greek Hephæstos, who, according to another tradition, is identified with the Gnostic demiurge. Those famous furnaces at which he labours are seven in number, and certainly correspond to the planetary spirits at the command of the demiurge, and to the seven lower Sefiroth of the Cabbalistic Tree. In one

* Whitehead in his *Science and the Modern World* points out the absurdity of the Christian habit of paying God what he calls "metaphysical compliments." He has been conceived as the foundation of the metaphysical situation with its ultimate activity. If this conception be adhered to, there can be no alternative except to discern in Him the origin of all "evil as well as of all good."

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passage Blake even tells us that Los' furnaces were given over to him by Urizen, who is elsewhere described as the chief of the Elohim. This seems to me a clue not to be overlooked. As in ancient mythologies where two deities of assimilated tribes contest with one another for supremacy, or unite their functions and their names, so Los and Urizen, both creators, reveal in their attributes their disparate origins. Urizen is drawn from cabbalistic characterisations of the Elohim, especially from *The Mosaicall Philosophy* of Robert Fludd; Los is based on the parallel figure of the Gnostic demiurge, as characterised in *The Divine Pymander*.

We know, then, that the Lamb was made by the son of God, the second person of the Trinity; and that the Tiger was made by the demiurge, the third person of the (Gnostic and Cabbalistic) trinity. Lamb and Tiger inhabit different worlds, and are the work of different creators. The lamb, we are told, feeds "*by the stream and o'er the mead*," "*making all the vales rejoice.*" The tiger is a denizen of "*the forests of the night.*" Never, to the best of my belief, is the word "forest" used by Blake in any context in which it does not refer to the natural, "fallen" world. There are no "forests of eternity" as there are fields of eternity. Forests are the endlessly multiplied vegetation of the mortal life of nature. Vala, the Goddess Nature, is described as roaming "in forests of eternal death, shrieking in hollow trees." We read of "forests of affliction," where lions and tigers roam; and the old blind tyrant Tiriel is led by his daughter "to the covert of a wood where beasts resort . . . but from her cries the tygers fled. All night they wandered through the wood"—the same combination of imagery, darkness, forests, and beasts of prey, as in *The Tyger*. These forests of nature are in fact only an endless multiplication of one tree, called by Blake "the Tree of Mystery." It is a tree explicitly associated with Urizen, the demiurge, for it grows by his "rock of the law," springing up from under his heel. It is the Mosaical Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. As Urizen sits writing in his "books of iron" the laws of good and evil that prevail in his fallen world, so the tree grows

> *Till the horrid plant bending its boughs*
> *Grew to roots when it felt the earth,*
> *And again sprung to many a tree.*
> *Amaz'd started Urizen when*
> *He beheld himself compassed round*
> *And high roofed over with trees.*

The stems stood thick, making a "dismal shade," and

> *The Tree still grows over the Void,*
> *Enrooting itself all around,*
> *An endless labyrinth of woe!* *

To this "accursed Tree," Urizen nailed the corpse of his first-born, slain by himself—a plain allusion to the crucifixion of Christ on the Tree, which, in esoteric Christian tradition, is always identified with the tree of Eden whose fruits occasioned man's fall:

Men say that Paradise and Calvary,
Christ's Cross and Adam's Tree grew in one place

—so Donne refers to that tradition. Sometimes Blake calls the tree an oak, and the forests are the oak-groves of the Druids, priests, like Urizen himself, of the religion of nature-worship that Blake condemns in all its forms, including that given it by Wordsworth.

The expression "tree of mystery" originates, I am inclined to believe, in a work by Paracelsus that deeply influenced Blake, and whose thought underlies the prophetic book *Vala* (*The Four Zoas*). In the *Philosophia Athenienses*,

* The Book of Ahania. The tree grows more entangled the more Urizen writes his books. I see here a possible reference to Berkeley, for whom the Tree of Knowledge is explicitly associated with the "delusion of words." The passage occurs in the *Principles of Human Knowledge*: "We need only draw the curtain of words, to behold the forest tree of knowledge, whose fruit is excellent and within the reach of any hand. Unless we take care *to clear the first principles of knowledge from the* embarrass and *delusion of words*, we may make infinite reasonings upon them to no purpose: we only draw consequences from consequences, and be never the wiser. The further we go, we shall only lose ourselves the more irrecoverably, and be the deeper entangled in difficulties and mistakes." This seems to me the clue to the curious statement in Blake's myth, that the mangrove-thicket of the Tree of Mystery grows *as a consequence* of Urizen's writings.

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Paracelsus' theme is the mystery of nature. In this eloquent and magnificent work, Paracelsus draws a picture of the whole process of nature, from first to last, issuing from nothing, and returning to nothing. Paracelsus' favourite image for the natural creation is smoke—"Briefly whatsoever hath a body is nothing but curdled smoke, wherein a particular predestination lieth hid . . . for all bodies shall pass away and vanish into nothing but smoke, they shall all end in a fume. That is the end of all things corporeal both living and dead." Nature is like a great forest that will at the end consume away to nothing:

> And as all the things of the creatures are wiped away, minished and do perish with the mystery, as a forest which the fire burneth into a little heap of ashes, out of which ashes but a little glass is made and that glass is brought into a small beryll, which beryll vanisheth into wind: in like manner we also shall be consumed, still passing from one thing into another, till there be nothing of us left. Such is the beginning, such is the end of the creatures. If the Cypress tree can spring out of a little grain, surely it may be brought into as small a quantity as that little kernel was at first.

When everything is "reduced to its nature, or first principle, to wit, into *nothing*; then," writes Paracelsus, "there is nothing within the sky but is endless and eternal." Such is that Tree of Mystery, nature; it vanishes like smoke; even as it grows and decays, it is only "curdled smoke." Therefore it is that Blake writes that, in this natural mystery, lions and tigers "roam in the redounding smoke, in forests of affliction." The forests themselves are "the redounding smoke" of Paracelsus' splendid image of the mutability of nature. Vala, goddess of nature, is at times described as a cloud of smoke; and in *Jerusalem*, Blake tells how on the day of the Last Judgement, the Tree of Mystery is consumed in flames. In his description of his painting of *The Vision of the Last Judgement*, he writes of "the eternal Consummation of Vegetable Life and Death with its Lusts. The wreathed Torches in their hands represents the Eternal Fire which is the fire of Generation or Vegetation, it is an Eternal Consummation."

The immediate association of the tree of natural creation with the demiurge comes, however, neither from Hermes Trismegistus nor from Paracelsus, but from Jewish Cabbalism. In an otherwise inexplicable passage, Blake states of the Tree of Mystery that its roots are "brandish'd in the heavens," its fruits in earth beneath. This symbol of the inverted tree is familiar to any student of the Cabbala. The meaning of the symbol is that created nature has its roots in the Supreme God, and its branches and fruits on the lower earth—the roots of nature thus being "above" or higher in the divine hierarchy than what we perceive on earth.

BEFORE leaving *The Tyger*, one last question remains unanswered. What is the meaning of the lines

> *When the stars threw down their spears*
> *And water'd heaven with their tears,*
> *Did he smile his work to see?*

To Blake these lines must have seemed unambiguously clear, and so they are to any student of alchemy. The tiger grew on earth because the stars rained down their influences—threw down beams of light like "spears," and "watered heaven" with those waters above the firmament that fertilise all growth in the elemental earth below. I believe I can point to the very text upon which the verse is based that may have caught Blake's attention for the same reason as it caught mine—because it is quoted twice by Robert Fludd in his *Mosaicall Philosophy*, and once by Thomas Vaughan in *Lumen de Lumine*, both books well known to Blake. The quotation is from Reuchlin's *de Arte Cabbalistica* and is translated by Vaughan as follows: "There is not an herb here below but he hath a star in heaven above; the star strikes him with her beams, and says to him: Grow." So the Tiger could not grow on the earth below the firmament until the starry influences, called into operation above the firmament by the Elohim, struck him with their beams and bade him "grow." There is a reference to the same process in *Europe*, when the Goddess Nature (Vala), speaking of the stars, says

> *. . . I seize their burning power*
> *And bring forth howling terrors, all devouring fiery kings.*

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—tigers, in fact. The stars weep because the Elohim has ordained the creation of such a world as this "below."

The Elohim operates his will upon earth by way of the stars. Fludd specifically states that the influences descend to earth, by way of the stars, "above the firmament": "The beams and brightness of the eternall influence do descend, first, to the starry region of the temporal world, and afterwards are showered down into the elementary spheres, and penetrate even into the bowels of the earth, and the dark abyss, to operate the will of that radicall essence which sent them forth." This belief in the influence of the "stars" and the Seven Planetary Spirits remains in popular astrology current to this day.

Blake, therefore, when he wrote *The Tyger*, was already working within a whole body of knowledge—alchemical, Cabbalistic, and Gnostic had already formed, when he wrote *The Tyger*, a considered philosophy of the nature of the creation and its author, and the answer to the question that forms the dramatic climax of the poem is, beyond all possible doubt, No.

George Aldis

Portrait of D. H. Lawrence

He sits and carves his male and female:
Adam straight as a pine
Hard as steel
Smelling of the rich red earth the warm
Wet sun the salt slaked brine;
Eve rounded as the rainbow and soft as a storm
Of feathers from heel
To hair sweet as eglantine
And silky smooth as a billowing sail.

He sees them lost in a soulless world
Of hump-backed housetops
Blocking out the sun
And sooty smoke smutting the air with gnomes
And goblin-shapes and bathing beaches polluting the drops
Of creamy surf like meringues with tin-cans and bones
And bits of bun—
Shattering their innocence in stops
And starts with lips in hatred curled.

He strips them of their serpent fig-leaves,
And lifts them above the show
And sham to where
Green grasses shoot, and the bells of the blue
Tinkle in rhythm with man and woman woe—
Released, soldering their sun-hot, dew—
Oily bodies in a flare
Of soul oneness: the flow
Of "tenderness" between the eternal Adams and Eves.

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Max Beloff

Democracy and its Discontents

III. Great Britain

THE British system of government is the subject of understandable envy in many parts of the contemporary world. Today, great countries like France and Italy have to make do with political institutions from which the masses of the organised working class appear to be hopelessly alienated, and which seem to depend for their survival on the contemptuous toleration of Right-wing elements who see them as the only immediately practicable barrier to Communism. It is natural, then, that their leaders should look wistfully at a Parliament where two great political parties appear capable of exercising the roles of government and opposition in easy alternation and where the extremists on either side can hardly be said to count. Even for the citizen of the United States there may at times appear to be something enviable in the British situation. The popular manuals of political science tell us that Britain, like other European countries, has a party system based upon deep divisions of class and principle, whereas the United States has two parties which are mere loose alliances of regional and sectional groupings, both of which accept in its entirety the traditional philosophy of the great republic. But, nevertheless, the bitterness of party conflict is far more in evidence between Republicans and Democrats than between Conservatives and Socialists. There are many aspects of foreign and imperial policy upon which Sir Winston Churchill and his friends did not see eye to eye with Mr. Attlee's cabinet; but neither Mr. Attlee, the late Mr. Ernest Bevin, nor Mr. Herbert Morrison has ever been exposed to the same insinuations of disloyalty to the national interest as it has been the fate of men like General Marshall and Mr. Dean Acheson to endure. We have had our share of dupes and traitors, but no one regards our administration as honeycombed with Muscovite cells, or thinks an apparatus of investigating committees and loyalty oaths essential to preserve our security or maintain our morale.

The air of stability, this lack of any obvious wish to change the basic rules of British political life, this easy and far-reaching tolerance in our intellectual life—found everywhere except in one or two segments of the Left-wing intelligentsia—are doubly startling because of the circumstances in which they exist. For Britain today is living in the aftermath of a double revolution. There has been a relative decline in her power in the world at large which, quite apart from its strategic implications in the atomic age, is rendered still more significant by the absolute dependence of the British economy upon world commerce. And there has been, accompanying this shift, and accelerated both by the war and by the social policies adopted during and after it, a real transfer of income and influence as between the different classes of the community. Neither of these two revolutions has yet run its course, and the former has been up till now cushioned in

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its impact by generous American assistance; yet, even so, the vast majority of the British people seems quite content to assume that their political institutions and habits can survive. Either they are right or they are staggeringly complacent.

I DOUBT whether the answer to such an inquiry will be found by studying such criticisms of the British system as are voiced from time to time. These tend to concentrate on relatively peripheral matters. There is a lot said about the growing power of the executive, both in administering the law and in making it. To a very great extent this is an unavoidable consequence of a trend to which the country as a whole appears to be irrevocably committed; the trend towards planning in one or other of its forms. All planning, even that exercised through purely fiscal controls, demands a measure of administration, and as soon as one gets past broad controls over such things as investment and capital movements, it is bound to impinge upon the citizen's daily activities, and to lead to a plethora of forms, licences, inspectors, tribunals of various kinds, and all the rest of the apparatus with which the modern citizen is so tiresomely familiar.

Three dangers are inherent in any situation in which State intervention in everyday affairs is a dominant factor in the life of the community. The officials concerned may be inefficient; they may be corrupt; and they may be arbitrary. The first of these may be the most dangerous, since if all important decisions must await official sanction the mere speed at which an answer can be obtained is vitally important. On the whole, despite the inevitable dilution of the Civil Service which the State's assumption of new responsibilities has entailed, it appears to be a fairly general view that the administrative machine is adapting itself reasonably well. As for corruption, in countries where the public service is reasonably remunerated, where the sense of community is strong, and official and commercial ethics well understood, this danger is normally kept well within bounds. More than that is not to be expected; and this much Britain has undoubtedly achieved.

The problem of arbitrariness is more important and has aroused more concern. It is relatively easy to discover and expose corruption within a system fundamentally uncorrupt, but it is much more difficult to decide when an unnecessary hardship has been inflicted on an individual. It is often argued that Britain suffers more than some countries which have undergone comparable social and economic changes because of a legal system devoted almost entirely to the defining of rights as between individuals, and hitherto largely unconcerned with demarcating the authority of the state. The enormous number of tribunals of different kinds, set up under separate acts, and acting according to different and autonomous sets of principles, is contrasted either with the traditional courts of law which it is assumed could in some way adapt themselves to these new functions, or, in writings like those of Professor W. A. Robson, with the neatness of a proper apparatus of administrative law, itself once regarded by legal theorists as involving the very antithesis of British freedom.

Two points may be made without venturing on to a terrain where the layman speaks or should speak with diffidence, if he speaks at all. In the first place, the danger of really arbitrary actions entailing grave injustice to individuals is something against which the British Press provides an important safeguard. Whatever may be said of our Press under some other heads, the mere fact that most newspapers represent a political outlook hostile to increasing activity on the part of the State means that they will always be particularly eager to find some example of bureaucratic excess. Once publicity has been aroused on any particular case, the procedure of the House of Commons and in particular the simple institution of Question-time makes it almost impossible for the matter not to be investigated and put right if the original decision proves to have been wrong.

The second point is that much of what appears arbitrary may simply be the result of the inability of rule-makers to do their work

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properly, either because the matter that has to be dealt with is so complicated that no rules can be devised to fit all cases, or because the public mind on the subject is still so unclear that it demands the prosecution of mutually incompatible policies. The task of adjudicating on demands for orders for possession under the Rent Restriction Acts may mean almost impossible choices between the general tendency of the legislation to protect tenants and the hardship which the refusal of a possession order may impose upon the owner of the property. Applications for deferment under the military acts may involve a sharp conflict between the general feeling that military service is a burden which all should share equally, and the unwillingness to rob families of an irreplaceable breadwinner—where as on a farm, the individual concerned may be a breadwinner in two senses, opinion may be very genuinely divided. Alternatively, there may be a genuine conflict between two conceptions of the public good. When the planning authorities permit the building of a new multiple store in central Oxford, they please those who believe that private interests should be permitted to cater to the demand of Oxford's industrial population for greater shopping facilities. At the same time, by worsening the traffic congestion they offend those concerned about the slow movement of traffic, those who believe that the decision will reduce the city's amenities as a tourist centre, and those, rather fewer, who believe that the interests of the University in keeping the city as uncongested and as quiet as possible should have been treated as primary. It is difficult to see how equations of this kind can be perfectly resolved to everyone's satisfaction, by the most accurate and fair-minded of social mathematicians.

An even more glaring case of incompatible objectives arises when it is held that the State must act directly in the economic sphere by nationalising some areas of the economy. Despite the important example of the contrary supplied by the historic organisation of the Post Office, the British preference has been for the creation of separate bodies to administer the industries taken over, and for the government to exercise only a form of more or less remote control. This, it is argued, is essential so that industries should run themselves on commercial as opposed to civil-service lines: they cannot operate, we are told, within the confines which normal administrative practice imposes. In practice this comes to mean that Parliament cannot use its favourite device of the question to satisfy itself about the detailed working of the industries concerned. But this in turn provokes the criticism that the nationalised industries are insufficiently subjected to public control. To behave in the market-place like a capitalist firm, and at Westminster like a government department with a responsible minister, might daunt any chameleon.

More fundamental, no doubt, are the questions raised by the impact upon Parliament itself of the growth and power of the party machines: we often hear it said that all independence among Members has been lost, and that back-benchers are mere division-lobby fodder. Here again, the case is not always fully thought out. It is not true that in modern times, that is to say since the beginning of the expansion of the suffrage, the British House of Commons has to an appreciable extent consisted of independent Members. Even before 1832, indeed, party divisions were the lifeblood of Parliament, however different the significance then attached to the word "party." It has, after all, always been the case that the function of Parliament has been to provide majorities without which government could not be carried on, and that men concerned with government have looked askance at Members whose votes could not be relied on either to sustain an administration or to vote against it in the hope of being thereby in a position to sustain a new one. It is untrue, contrary to popular belief, that there have nearly always only been two parties: the point is that there have been parties and not a series of shifting and inchoate groups.

What is much truer, probably, is that within the parties the authority of the leader or caucus or machine is much more conspicuous. What is needed, one feels, is not the occasional lone wolf—though there is room for him too —but more men within the parties not afraid

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of speaking their own minds or of taking an independent line within the limits imposed by their unwillingness to see the opposing party triumph. But it is difficult to see how the strengthening of party discipline could have been avoided once the path of increasing democracy had been entered on. The more voters, the bigger the constituencies, the greater the expense of election, the more important the national leaders and slogans, the greater the dependence of the local candidate upon national headquarters—all this followed as a matter of course from the franchise reforms.

Not less important, though less talked of, has been the effect of parliamentary work becoming itself a whole-time profession: this has been the fruit of the increasing activities of the State and was again unavoidable. It was recognised, by the decision to give Members of Parliament salaries, that this was tending to be the case, and it was held that no one should be debarred from representing a constituency because his means were insufficient. At the same time, the decline of the rentier, the greater competitiveness of business and professional work, and the increasing demands made upon M.P.'s by their constituents—demands which also result from increasing state activity—mean that a very high proportion of M.P.'s depend for their living either upon their salaries, or upon other forms of income which accrue to them because they are M.P.'s. If a man depends upon the party leadership for his family's bread-and-butter, his possibilities of independence are obviously limited. Why look for martyrs in the House of Commons?

It is uncommon in British political discussion to pay much attention to these points. But they are not new and were indeed understood by the thinkers of the classical Victorian era in British politics long before they had more than a limited application. Anthony Trollope's political novels showed how difficult was the situation of the young man without substantial private means who went into politics hoping to recoup his fortunes by attaining governmental office, there being then no payment of the private Member. To stand by principle was ruinous; only a wealthy marriage could give him genuine independence. The personable widows of bankers are not easily found by the aspiring politician, and few promising young men today can hope for Phineas Finn's *dea ex machina*. If they have no basis for their lives outside Parliament, it is unreasonable that they should enter upon a career which may be interrupted or even terminated at any moment by vast convulsions of the electorate with which they have nothing to do. If they do enter upon it, the party whip had better be obeyed.

For whatever may be said in speeches, party whips, and for that matter, party leaders, do not like independence on the part of Members of Parliament. It is true that the abolition of University representation, which provided the last opening for genuinely independent and unattached Members, was carried through for purely party reasons —a piece of gerrymandering on a considerable scale. But it has been impossible to restore the University seats, because it is thought that the country's devotion to the democratic dogma of "one man, one vote" is far stronger than any desire to secure a source of representation to some extent free from normal party pressures. For genuine debate on important issues, it is probable that the House of Lords is a superior forum to the House of Commons, and this superiority would obviously become even more marked if any of the mooted reforms of the Upper House were to come to anything. For this, among other reasons, such reform is highly unlikely.

FUNDAMENTALLY, then, Britain has a single-chambered legislature whose chief business, other than acting as a watch-dog over the doings of administrators, is to provide a government with the majorities it needs for passing legislation and raising money. On the whole, this would seem to conform to what most contemporary British citizens feel to be appropriate to the age in which they live, and they are content to let the swing of the pendulum decide which of the broad tendencies which divide them into two almost equally matched parties should govern the country during the lifetime of a particular Parliament. But to someone trying to stand outside the system and

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to see it in historical perspective, the whole thing seems to rest upon certain unstated and unformulated presuppositions, of which two at least must be taken into account before we can evaluate its future prospects.

British political life, like that of other countries, is predicated upon the assumption that its institutions can in fact exercise authority within the spheres in which they have formal competence. In the circumstances of the modern world, this is everywhere largely an illusion. The most vital decisions affecting the daily lives of British citizens may be made by governments over which they have no control. What is done on the Capitol at Washington—or not done!—may be far more important than whether Conservative or Socialist measures emerge from the deliberations at Westminster. Ever since the First World War, we have witnessed a series of experiments at international organisation which have attained varying degrees of efficiency. But none of these can do more than offer improved methods of negotiations by representatives of the nations concerned. They do not solve the political problem of making real the link between the popular will as expressed through elections and the policies pursued. Much of the frustration in British political life which often vents itself in unconstructive anti-Americanism is undoubtedly due to this perception of the unreality in the mid-20th century of the notion of a sovereign national community, and at the same time the impossibility of visualising any other framework for political life. Indeed, the more democratic the country becomes, the more it expects from government intervention, the less it can tolerate infringements on its sovereignty, and the more it resents such of these as are inevitable.

The dependence of Britain's economy and so of her citizens' livelihood upon external circumstance lends added point to the fears of those who regard the success of Parliamentary government in Britain as due to the relatively high standard of living that her population has achieved and fear that a sudden decline due perhaps to external events might cause a swing away from traditional towards more violent political courses. Whether this argument is as relevant today as it was when propounded by the late Harold Laski and others in the 1930's, partly depends on how far the New Keynesian economics will be effective if put to the test, in seeing that a fall in the national income is not distributed so that the burden falls so heavily on one section of one class in the community. It is also argued that the loss of economic security and social prestige which has befallen the English middle-classes may have removed one of the principal obstacles to a revulsion against a political system which is so largely its creation. So far as has been seen, there has been little indication that the Continental precedents are proving relevant for this country; but against this has to be set the fact that the social revolution itself has hitherto meant certain new opportunities for middle-class skills. The question again resolves itself into the probable effects of a serious economic contraction particularly when so many overseas outlets for British energies have been, or are being cut off. Once again the inquiry leads beyond these shores.

But even if we overlook the international and imperial aspects of the problems of British democracy, there is yet another point of view from which the apparent stability of its political arrangements may well be threatened. This point is often put by saying that the system was developed, and worked well, in a period when the two major parties were divided by no great issues of principle; when neither desired a change in the accepted social order; when each could succeed the other in turn without finding it necessary to repeal its predecessors' legislation; when the Tories finding the Whigs bathing and walking away with their clothes was a conceivable, not to say commonplace, political operation. Since the rise of the Socialists to be the second great party, this—we are told—has ceased to be the case. One party exists in order to transform society, the other to keep it as it is. Even when only the outworks of capitalism are in question, a Conservative government finds it necessary to go back upon some of the actions taken by the last government, and the leaders of the Labour Party on their side announce their intention of returning at once to the *status*

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quo. It is obvious that this process, if often repeated, is likely to be disastrous for the country's economy, and to strain to the full the resources of parliamentary government. Nevertheless, this argument does not seem to me to run deep enough.

One must beware of overestimating the importance of party government and of legislation generally. What matters is the fact of government, and the processes through which the governmental machine is kept going and its personnel recruited. If looked at from this point of view, the rise and fall of political parties over the century and a quarter since the Great Reform Bill appears as a relatively superficial aspect of British history when compared, for instance, with the development of the Civil Service, of an educational system largely geared to its recruitment, and of the State's links with industry, commerce, and the professions. The British political system is remarkable among democracies for the strongly hierarchical traits which it has succeeded in keeping: for the administrative class in the Civil Service, representing as it does an aristocracy of talent, has hitherto retained its pre-eminent position under governments of all political colours. To this extent, the British system allows place for the idea that government is a special and rare skill, and that, along with all other special skills, this one must be cultivated and fostered in the national interest. In other words, British democracy has been as successful as it has, largely because it has succeeded in being so undemocratic.

For we must not forget—and American history exists to remind us of it—that the notion of government as a skill, and the wider notion of a hierarchy of talents among individuals which a wise nation will cultivate and make the best of, are both highly undemocratic. When the Labour Party in its present egalitarian mood turns away from combating special educational privilege and towards the alternative idea that everyone's education should be as uniform as possible, it becomes the first wholeheartedly and genuinely democratic movement in British history. If it were to succeed it would wipe out the surviving aristocratic elements in the British polity, remove the restraints upon the exploitation by demagogues of political majorities, and set Britain upon the downward path which undiluted democracy has always followed from Aristotle's times to our own. The battle for the survival of the grammar school is, in its implications, the most crucial political struggle that modern Britain has known.

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Letter from Puerto Rico

THE U. AND A.S.A.

THE United States is actually one of the most complicated political units on the face of the earth. The ordinary American thinks of his country as consisting of the continental U.S.A. and nothing more. He forgets that we Americans have overseas possessions: even such issues as statehood for Alaska and Hawaii, or self-government for Samoa and Guam, impress him as foreign news.

Few Americans realise that the U.S.A.—in terms of square miles of this planet's surface, strategically controlled—came out as the biggest "space-grabber" of the Second World War. Yet, if you stop to think of it, our asking for and getting the U.N. trusteeship of the Carolines, Marshalls, and Marianas, plus the strategic trusteeship for the Okinawas, pushed the U.S. naval frontier from a short distance out of Pearl Harbour all the way to a short distance this side of Vladivostok.

Take another instance.

Few Americans realise that we now have a completely informal American commonwealth of nations which is bigger than the British Empire of today. Yes, it is true. Most of the Latin American countries, the Philippines, Formosa, and Japan are associated with us in the intimate development and execution of joint military policies which affect business, security, and welfare in every one of these countries. No one would call Japan a dominion of the U.S.; yet Japan and America have a much closer relationship than that between South Africa and Britain, or India and Britain, or Canada and Australia, all of whom are co-members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Even more strangely, most Americans in the continental United States do not realise that the U.S.A. gave birth in 1951 to that most remarkable of all political children, an offspring which is at the same time a Siamese twin. Its name is Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico gets into the news because of its homicidal lunatic fringe—the Nationalists of that Harvard-trained eccentric, Señor Albizu Campos. As so often is the case, the good news of Puerto Rico gets left out. Only the bad is printed. The bad is Albizu—himself either a psychotic, or the world's last desperate romantic in the greying art of revolution. Albizu represents something less than 1 per cent of the Puerto Ricans—with perhaps an utmost of 9 per cent additional *puertorrigueño* sentiment mildly neutralist in the terrorist-mainland struggle. What of the 90 per cent of Puerto Rico?

PUERTO RICO is today, by the language of the Spanish text of the Puerto Rican constitution, an "Associated State" of the United States of America. Theoretically, I suppose that makes for a new kind of union consisting of forty-eight of the United States plus one new "associated state." If Americans were legal purists, they might insist on calling their country The United and Associated States of America, or the U. and A.S.A. for short. What happened was completely irrational, very flattering to us, and very practical. It has worked well for three years. The Puerto Rican nationalists are now pretty much off the political scene; they belong in the crime news. Puerto Rico is both a free nation and a part of this nation. Puerto Ricans do not worry about being Americans or not being Americans any more than do the Canadians worry as to whether they are British or not. A psychoanalyst friend of mine recently told me very gloomily that he thought it would do bad things to the nerves of the Puerto Ricans for them to try to be Latin Americans and *yanqui* North Americans at the same time; I am afraid I do not agree—not from what I have seen of Puerto Rico.

How did Puerto Rico get to be an Associated

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State? The Spaniards found Puerto Rico in 1493. Outside of exterminating the natives and importing Negro slaves, whom they freed in 1873, they did little except raise crops for 405 years. In 1898 General Nelson Miles, unofficially remembered as the fattest General in the American army, conquered the island, somewhat to his own surprise. (General Miles, by the way, according to the Washington newspapers of the time, died the happiest death of any General I know. He passed away in 1925, laughing himself to death at the circus. His palatial home is now the Washington headquarters for the General Confederation of Women's Clubs, and his huge stables house one of Washington's smartest restaurants, The Iron Gate.) In successive steps during fifty years of U.S. control, our Congress gave Puerto Rico civil government in 1900, bestowed U.S. citizenship on all Puerto Ricans in 1917, and, also in 1917, gave the island a large measure of self-government. After the war, in which Puerto Ricans served in the American Army, as individuals as well as in distinct military units, the American Congress started that curious train of events which has now led us into becoming the U. & A.S.A.

The Puerto Ricans were asked, "Do you want to draft your own constitution?" In a plebiscite on June 4th, 1951, they voted overwhelmingly in favour of doing so. In August 1951, elections were held for the constitutional convention. The pro-American Governor, Señor Muñoz Marin, leader of the Popular Democratic Party, came out way ahead of the statehood and Socialist parties. The constitutional convention got to work on September 17th and the new constitution was adopted by a four-to-one vote in Puerto Rico on March 3rd, 1952; on July 3rd, 1952, President Truman signed the House Joint Resolution embodying the approval of the U.S. Congress.

Fifty-four years of rule have made the Puerto Ricans Americans, while leaving them Puerto Ricans. They are both, and either—depending on what they feel like at the moment. The island is called the "Commonwealth of Puerto Rico" in the English version; that keeps the *Yanquis* up North happy. In Spanish the language is more blunt: Puerto Rico is an "*estado libro y asociado.*" There is quite a difference between being a commonwealth in English and a free and associated state in Spanish, but the Puerto Ricans were smart enough to know that we would never notice it.

Thus, the Puerto Ricans became independent, while remaining part of the U.S.A. They have almost all the advantages of being a free republic, and others which no free republic can claim.

RACIALLY, the Puerto Ricans are descended from the original Spanish settlers and their Negro slaves; fictitiously, Puerto Ricans like to pretend that they are also descended from the extinct Borinquen Indians, who were the aboriginal inhabitants of the island before the Spaniards converted them and then worked them to death.

No banana republic, Puerto Rico is a modern island suffering mildly from overeducation and the fluctuation of sugar prices. The people make up for this by leading very polished and civilised lives. I cannot imagine a better cure for stomach ulcers than two years' residence in Puerto Rico. Racial tensions are almost unknown, though there is a slight amount of quaint and silly snobbery on the score of pigmentation. The people have their own lottery, which we in the continental U.S.A. do not. They have their own cockfights, which we do not. And they have something which we continental Americans would certainly enjoy—special exemptions from the Federal income tax. Puerto Rico is one of the few places left where an American businessman can get out from under existing U.S. tax laws and at the same time retain all the advantages of being inside the domestic U.S. market. This unique arrangement arises from legislation passed by Congress designed to facilitate the development of the island. Income tax exemption is not perpetual. It does apply, for a period of years, to anyone who is willing to introduce into the island an industry hitherto unknown. A manufacturer of plastic thingumybobs, electronic trivets, or any other product currently produced in the U.S.A., but not in the island, could send himself down there for a pleasant retirement—or could take care of a reckless son with a slight propensity to bottles—by setting up a project in the happy island with a climate better than Florida, and cheap round trips straight into Manhattan.

Not that the topic is of any serious economic or political interest, but it is worth remarking that the island is full of pretty girls, and that

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the people dress gaily. San Juan, the capital, has a population of almost 400,000 and some extraordinarily plush hotels, which offer year-round bathing, first-class gambling casinos, and *de luxe* food at about only four times what you would pay in New York. Like most undeveloped countries, Puerto Rico is still divided very sharply between rich and poor. But, unlike many, it has a tremendous future ahead of it, a future which arises from its paradoxical position as being both American and not American, all at the same time.

It is sad and a little funny that we Americans did not realise the tremendous compliment paid us by the small Puerto Rican nation three years ago, when they chose to associate themselves with us for ever. We did not brag of it to the world at large. We did not thank the Puerto Ricans for staying, nor express our pleasure that they had not chosen to attempt the hazards of independence. We paid practically no attention to what happened in Puerto Rico even when the Puerto Ricans, within the limits of their small insular country, did more for the U.S.A. than has any other country since the Republic of Hawaii. They joined us all over again and we did not even know it. Neither do we know that we are part, strictly speaking, of the U. & A.S.A.

Paul M. A. Linebarger

Howard Griffin

If You Look Closely

If you look closely it is there
—the sadness, the fortitude, the strain,
clear in the wide plains of the cheeks
rivered with tears, crossed by the bridge
of the strong nose not strong enough
to carry the heart away from suffering.
The chevronned eyebrows gather
in a gold fury to see if they can help;
they cannot help; no one can help this man
who must live now with an apparent
future.
The pillars of his throat have slaved before,
hurrying upward with a shaft
to put in a dying place but now the chin,
so harshly cleft, is covered with gold growth
of advancing beard. Do not look
too near nor lean too curiously
above the canyons of this face.

His hands, rough arrows that have found
their mark: chest and shoulders rife
with musculature slack and yet
complexly-tied as if the cogwork of
a great machine showed inward-out.
Sinews, viaducts, long veins
leading you by snared clues
of treasure.—He is not Achilles
—more human—now only
this here-ness of blood and refuelling.
At last the brightest face
dissolves into the darkness of the past
and sometimes, look, the body becomes a
face,
granular, tragic, full of history.
The unfamiliar eye and the eye
never are still, they move
onward or . . . backward through
the eyelash-wilderness of fern.

—Oh when a face
for the first time confronts
another face it is as if the sun
lit from above a massive land.
The forehead with its bracts
cannot deceive—its furrows
tell the truth. Have faith
in the construction of the ear
which no one can control; observe
the head, the entire head, and how
it's socketed; this is a fact.
Lean not too curiously above
his face and frame, depend
only upon the amazing glow
evident in the compact of the flesh.

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Music

MUSIC FESTIVAL IN ROME

THOUGH it is doubtful whether Bach ever joined in public discussions on the future of the Cantata, or Mozart on the relation between æsthetics and technique, it is too easy by far to dismiss all musical congresses as a waste of time. At the very least they afford an opportunity for musicians of every country to meet one another and to exchange ideas. And when a congress attracts half the leading composers of the world and most of the best critics, as in Rome during April at the meeting sponsored jointly by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the *Radio-televisione Italiana*, and the European Cultural Centre, the result cannot fail to be stimulating.

I suppose you could say that the congress had been planned as an antidote against provincialism of every kind. Against those, for example, who invariably say of a composer writing in the twelve-tone technique that he is merely following the latest fashion, or working against the "laws of nature." Against those, also, who think that only twelve-tone music is now of the slightest value. How stimulating it is to meet twelve-tone composers who maintain that Hindemith is partly right; and who, although they may try to organise more sustained and delicate fluctuations of harmonic intensity than Hindemith ever proposed in his *Craft of Musical Composition* or ever dreamed of in his own works, still express their gratitude to him for his brilliant classification of chords! How refreshing, on the other hand, to meet a Hindemithian who does not think twelve-tone music a disease!

ONE of the chief lessons of the Rome Congress was to observe the great range of expression and of treatment possible within the twelve-tone method. Of course there were a few utterly boring works which played into the hands of the old professors: "The trouble is, the young are not well trained and fall easily into the dodecaphonic trap, with its ready-made expression and its Viennese grimaces." There was an Overture by Giselher Klebe, written for quite a large orchestra but using only a fraction of it at a time, everything pieced together bar by bar as by the finest smithwork, pianissimo, pianissimo, then a tiny spitting explosion lasting one note only, and finally—very strange—the fundamental form of the twelve-tone row appearing in a kind of Bruckner apotheosis. You might feel that the composer had not yet mastered the fragmentary style of scoring that he carried here to an extreme; but you could hardly say that the piece was dull, or, on the other hand, that you could follow its design with conscious appreciation—it consisted of ninety-six variations passing by in the fantastically short time of eight minutes. I hope this Overture will be heard again, even if it turns out to be no more than an interesting experiment.

How very different was Peragallo's violin concerto! Those responsible for organising the Rome Congress had the idea of inviting twelve composers (from eight different countries) to write new works for the occasion: there were to be four violin concertos, four overtures, and four chamber works for voice and instruments; and a handsome prize was offered for the best work of each kind, according to the decision of a select jury. Klebe shared a prize with Vladimir Vogel (whose Overture was not far removed from *Tristan*); Peragallo was the only composer of the twelve to win an award outright. The old professors were out in force again: "Of *course* it won the prize; it sounded so much like music that it might not have been in the twelve-tone technique at all!" This is really

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childish, but it leads to an important question on which serious musicians are by no means agreed. If you ask: "Can twelve-tone writing be either strict or free?" you will at once embroil yourself in passionate arguments.

In one of the Rome concerts we heard, in succession, Luigi Nono's *Homage to Garcia Lorca, No. 2*, and Dallapiccola's *Canti Greci*. Nono leaves nothing to the improvisation of the moment; it is the serial structure, down to the last detail of tone-production, that enlists the full effort of his imagination. To *experience* a structure of such novelty is, I confess, quite beyond my powers at present; nevertheless, many of us felt at this concert that the serial technique, even carried into every nerve of the music, was still an instrument in Nono's grasp and not a tyranny forcing him to speak out of character. His *Homage to Garcia Lorca* impressed by its delicacy, and gave one a desire to hear it again. Coming next to Dallapiccola's *Canti Greci*, it seemed to belong almost to another century. Yet however strict Nono may be, and however free Dallapiccola's *Canti Greci* in their application of the twelve-tone technique, I cannot see that this contrast of treatment can really be made a criterion of excellence, one way or the other. No analysis whatever would prejudice my enjoyment of the extraordinary beauty of outline in Dallapiccola's *Sex Carmina Alcaei*, or in the *Tre Poemi* heard in London a few months ago. The only criticism I would make is on quite different grounds, and I make it tentatively because Dallapiccola is a true poet whose works have moved me almost more than any others in recent years. But the experience of hearing thirteen songs of his in succession brought home the fact that his music has less rhythmic than melodic interest; his imagination is poured into the melodic lines and into the texture, which is sometimes of an ethereal beauty, but meanwhile the music runs a terrible risk of monotony because it has too little rhythmic contrast.

TO RETURN to the question of "strict" or "free." Perhaps there are things which may have to be given up, even permanently, in twelve-tone music; perhaps we shall have to do without anything analogous to the symmetry of architecture, for example, or to verse; and perhaps repetitions will prove to be out of order, and, in the same way, fugues and passacaglias, etc. One composer in Rome described his idea of twelve-tone writing by comparing it with an aircraft which used engine-power for the take-off but once in the air became like a glider. This would require, with a vengeance, that sense of form which has been defined as "knowing where you are at every moment." Such analogies may or may not be useful. But a new constructive logic *is* developing; and where the twelve-tone method is concerned, I am convinced that it is no more a "fashion" than plastics, and that it can yield quite fresh outlines and harmonies, even within a very simple context.

Indeed we had an illustration of this in Rome, in a setting of William Morris by the American composer, Lou Harrison. If I remember correctly, the viola and 'cello play a drone through most of the piece, on the notes D, E, and G; and the same notes are used occasionally as a loud refrain on the harp. Meanwhile voice (mezzo-soprano) and violin together trace an innocent and rather beautiful melody with the remaining nine notes, and the flute follows just behind them, playing the same melody an octave above, but sometimes falling back a little, then catching up again. In the middle section the piano has an ostinato of all twelve notes, played rather staccato and without sustaining pedal, and with the right hand very high, two octaves above the left. Of course, these elements I have described could belong to a very bad piece indeed; it all depends on the composer's ear, on his ordering of the twelve-tone series, and on his dramatic insight. Yet I am not at all sure whether any non-twelve-tone treatment of Morris's "Christ bring me to thy bliss" could have achieved quite so strong an impact with so little means.

Peragallo's violin concerto provided a similar case, on a grander scale. It had true distinction, with many lyrical moments of great beauty, imaginative writing for the orchestra, and a cadenza of remarkable power in the first movement. On the other hand, the construction seemed rather loose, the last movement showed a falling-off in quality, and one felt a lack of homogeneity in the work as a whole. In short, it was not a masterpiece. But once again the twelve-tone basis gave certain passages a captivating freshness they might not otherwise have had.

Perhaps I have written a disproportionate amount on the twelve-tone works heard in

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Rome. Yet I think it is vital that we should understand the twelve-tone method not as a denial of tonality but as an enlargement of it; and that we should credit at least a fair number of twelve-tone composers with being able to attach some meaning to their choice of harmonies other than that they are derived from a certain series. Perhaps we can learn very much from Dallapiccola's technical freedom, as from his faith in the destiny of mankind. At the same time, let us value the explorations of such young composers as Luigi Nono, and not talk too easily of "all head and no heart."

HERE let me leave the subject of twelve-tone music and say at once that Racine Fricker's violin concerto must have run Peragallo's quite close for the prize. Where the latter had moments of intense beauty but might have gained from being five or six minutes shorter, Fricker's concerto appeared to have a convincing continuity but just missed the freshness and magic of the Peragallo. Each had the particular virtue that the other lacked.

We were to have heard Blacher's *Orchester-Ornamente*, but apparently Hans Rosbaud is the only conductor so far who can steer his way through the variable metres of Blacher's recent works, at least at the proper tempo; and as he was not available, we were treated instead to the surefire *Paganini Variations* of 1947. I must say I enjoyed this tremendously. Whatever Blacher writes, you may be certain that it will be neither dull nor amateur. He will lead you into a night-club or into a seven-part canon with complete indifference so far as the standard of his artistry is concerned; and among the most important attributes of this artistry are a superb sense of movement, a wonderful ear, an instinct for the right moment to make a change, and economy in all things: texture, harmony, orchestral colour. Though I doubt whether Blacher would count the *Paganini Variations* an important work, there are few who could not learn from it something of the tact and restraint of true mastery, still fewer who would not be enchanted by its sheer invention; and there is probably no orchestra at all that would not revel in playing it. Why it is not heard at least once every six months over here is a mystery to me.

I said earlier on that the Rome Conference had been planned as an antidote against provincialism; and indeed it was invigorating to find so many critics and composers adopting a liberal attitude towards the various schools of thought in contemporary music. In the old days, every ISCM festival was a meeting of the clans, an exciting and necessary clash of principles and techniques; but such partisanship has lost its usefulness now, and in Rome there was even a work which seemed in itself to embody the wider attitude I have just mentioned: namely, Stravinsky's *Septet* in three movements.

Stravinsky's interest in Webern has been known for some time. The first fruits appeared in the beautiful *Cantata* of 1952; but in the *Septet* Stravinsky goes much further, even including some of the typical outlines and instrumentation of Webern's music. At the same time, every bar of the *Septet* springs from a tonal imagination utterly different from Webern's; through the frequent outlining of triads, through sequences and repetitions, through the melodic and rhythmic placing of certain notes, Stravinsky remains Stravinsky, even though the sound is often very hard; hard and rather dry. One is reminded of Roland-Manuel's remark, that some of Stravinsky's works are so antiseptic in character that they run the risk of achieving nothing but cleanliness; all depends on the ability of the microbes to make their way in, despite every precaution on the composer's part. The *Septet* is a little like that; yet how often one has found that on a second or third hearing Stravinsky's music makes a very different impression! Thus the organisation of the final *Gigue* may prove to have originated a new order of relationships which cannot possibly be grasped at once. In this last movement, a fugue, Stravinsky writes out tone-rows for the various instruments, only these rows are in fact carefully chosen scales of eight notes. They have no thematic significance at all; what they do is to define a field within which each instrument moves in any given passage—for the tone-row changes when Stravinsky wants to bring in the fugue subject in another key. Perhaps the interplay of the various "fields" may turn out to be an important idea. But in any case, I believe that Stravinsky has carried the use of serial techniques further again in his latest work, the *Dirge, Canons and Song*. It will be exciting to study this thoroughly and to see exactly what he is doing. Meanwhile the lead he has

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given (at the age of seventy) in bringing together two supposedly irreconcilable schools of thought, is something that will always stand to his credit and may well prove a turning point of great historical importance.

There are two other works I must mention. Henze's twelve-tone opera, *Boulevard Solitude*—a version of *Manon*—was received with great hostility. The trouble began in the third scene, where Henze writes a short trio for Manon, Lescaut, and Lilaque père (the Dr. Schön of *Boulevard Solitude*), and gives the old man a succession of pianissimo A's and B flats. The resultant shrieking, combined with trite rhythms and dreary harmonies, drove the Italian audience quite mad; and I doubt if we heard more than three-quarters of the music after that; the rest was shouting and whistling. It is a pity not to be able to say that the opera was in fact worthwhile. But it is a Manon written with very little interest in Manon herself; and though the music is remarkable in many ways for a composer of twenty-four, it appears to lack any spiritual content. Its æsthetic is that of about 1925, which now seems incredibly passive. The musical invention deteriorates, I think, as the opera goes on, and littered here and there are undigested remnants and impressions of other works; the orchestral writing, too, brilliantly inventive at times, is spoiled by the excessive use of certain effects. No composer hearing *Boulevard Solitude* will ever again write a passage for muted trumpets playing fortissimo. Far better things will come from Henze; but where *Boulevard Solitude* is concerned, having sat through two performances nothing on earth will drag me to a third.

Elliott Carter's *String Quartet* is quite another matter. It is as tough as can be. Coming directly afterwards in the same programme, Schönberg's *Piano Suite*. op. 25 seemed hardly more difficult than Kuhlau or Clementi. Yet I did not feel that Carter had introduced difficulties for their own sake; rather that he was bursting with novel ideas and was determined to give them full-grown treatment.

The Quartet has four movements; it lasts forty-five minutes and it is only as a concession to human weakness that it makes any pause from beginning to end. There are in fact two breaks: one in the middle of the second-movement Scherzo and the other after the introduction to the final Variations. The manœuvre works brilliantly: because in a curious way these arbitrary breaks do not disturb the continuity of the music. They even accentuate it since the last pattern that has been heard is immediately taken up again after the pause, with renewed impact.

In its texture the Quartet is more complex than any other I have ever heard. In the first movement especially the four instruments always have contrasting rhythms and outlines; and although the rhythmic ensemble becomes somewhat simpler as the work proceeds, there are no passages that could be described as points of rest. This may well be a weakness. For one thing it makes it difficult to follow the subtle effect of Carter's metrical modulation (a technique based on the lengthening or shortening of the basic note unit). There are too many strains on the attention at once. Yet it would be quite wrong to suggest that Carter does nothing more than subject us to forty-five minutes of admirable hell. On the contrary, there are many moments of striking imagination: for example the notes which appear in one instrument after the other with such dramatic timing in the Trio, then plunge downwards in succession, like stars exploding and dropping to earth; or the whole of the *Adagio*. There the 'cello and viola begin with a stormy fantasia, and are then joined by the two violins, which move serenely through page after page and are heard with beautiful effect between the broken phrases of the 'cello and viola. Gradually the violins descend from their ethereal height, gradually the 'cello and viola become more and more insistent, until the viola rises to the E flat over two octaves above middle C, and the 'cello needs both bass and treble clefs to record its agitation.

I do not know whether every aspect of this quartet is satisfying, whether, for example, the harmonies will prove to be right and convincing after many hearings. But it is certainly a work of which American music may be proud, and the sooner we get our teeth into it over here, the sooner we shall benefit from its example of strength and grandeur of treatment.

William Glock

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Communications

YOUNG WRITERS

SIR—In his editorial article in the February issue of ENCOUNTER, Mr. Stephen Spender remarked on the dearth of young English writers of marked individual talent who had emerged since the war. He also made the point that most young English writers of today seemed to aim at formality and safety, with little ambition "to become an exile like Joyce, a rebel like Van Gogh, a solitary like Rilke...." Now, it certainly is a rather striking fact that for the first time in many years England is today without a literary *avant-garde*. But I wonder whether it is not best to look at this question from the standpoint of the young writers themselves; if one does so, one can immediately see some good reasons for their attitude.

If one compares the present post-war years with the parallel period between the end of the First World War in 1918 and the year 1926 (the year when Mr. Spender first began to write at Oxford) one comes upon a significant contrast. During the earlier period, the current of creative writing still flowed strong. Yeats was still producing some of his best poetic work, while Shaw wrote his most dramatic play, *St. Joan*, and *Heartbreak House*, his most lyrical. Within a few brief years, three writers of genius had opened new literary vistas—James Joyce with *Ulysses*, T. S. Eliot with *The Waste Land*, E. M. Forster published *A Passage to India*, and Virginia Woolf *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. And there was the war: while the guns were still sounding on the Western front, young officer-writers like Osbert Sitwell, Siegfried Sassoon, and Robert Graves were attacking the monstrosity of war in passionate and bitter satire, while away by himself another officer of genius, T. E. Lawrence, was writing his extraordinary and self-involved *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. However varied these writings and their merits, at least they embody a sharp and definite attitude towards the fact of war, a trait signally lacking in English writing of recent years.

Altogether, it was a colourful literary scene into which a young writer of the twenties could try to find his way. By contrast, to a young writer of the nineteen-fifties the literary scene must seem rather chill and desolate. Several eminent older writers have lapsed into silence. Some leading writers have vanished to America, others have returned to a formal religious orthodoxy, others have concerned themselves mainly with autobiography. Altogether there has been a cult of biography, of the past, of the backward look, but, apart from isolated figures like Orwell and Thomas, a striking absence of major creative writing. Thus, to a young writer of today it might well look as if the English modern movement had run its course, as if a heavy black line had been drawn across the literary page, and he and his generation were left groping for the new values of their bewildering time.

Some of the non-literary causes of this creative gap seem fairly clear, and they are the sort of causes which would affect young writers particularly. It is apparent that English society has suffered a number of traumatic shocks. There is the shock of the economic transformation of middle-class life. This has affected the writers themselves. In the inter-war years, many prominent English literary personages still led the leisured life based on efficient servants, formal, elaborate meals, and long country weekends; Oxford and Cambridge still encouraged cultured indolence, while foreign travel presented no difficulties. Such a background made readily for a sprightly or soaring individualism in the arts. It is difficult to say exactly why, yet in the new, levelled, raw English life of today, where middle-class preoccupation with making ends meet has become chronic and three undergraduates out of four have state grants, such individualism would somehow be inappropriate.

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Economic changes have also affected the subject-matter of literature by blurring those English class distinctions which had provided such a convenient framework for the English novel from the days of Jane Austen downwards. No doubt a successor to Mrs. Dalloway might be giving similarly gracious parties in Westminster today, but something important would be gone—a sense of the exclusiveness, of the unique and delightful legitimacy of English upper middle-class life, and hence a certain social confidence and sensitivity. Furthermore, poised precariously between the USA and the USSR, Britain is today no longer a real world power, but only one of second grade; largely gone are the colours and problems of the imperial background. There would be less purpose today in novels whose theme is the lack of intellectual contact across the colour bar, such as E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, George Orwell's *Burmese Days*, or Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson*. Today these racial issues are intellectually already decided and interest is fading. It has been realised that there must be a cultural parting of the ways, and that India, Pakistan, or Burma (where a generation ago that strange Imperial policeman, George Orwell, stood self-consciously in front of a Burmese mob and shot an elephant) have become foreign countries which English literature must see with new eyes.

Again, a generation ago a tradition of *international* literature seemed still intact. In England in the twenties the exploration of the great Russian novelists went closely together with the discovery of Freud and Joyce. But a young English writer of these post-war days—it is worth trying to see this through his eyes—must note that literature as he has been taught to understand the term has been abolished in Russia and now in Eastern Europe, that German creative writing has not yet begun to recover from the moral blow of Nazism, and that American literature for all its vigour is fighting hard against the continuous expansion of streamlined mass-magazine culture. Another gap in continuity, and another cause of bewilderment.

Another decisively important change has been the decline of the old Liberal optimism. In his autobiography Mr. Spender has recounted how his own schooldays and adolescence were still passed in an atmosphere dominated by Liberal faith in inevitable social progress. True, the onward march had been halted by a ghastly tragedy into which the nations had blundered—the First World War—but still, what with the League of Nations and general enlightenment one might see to it that such a blunder did not recur. Such beliefs had their importance for literature. To be sure, most leading writers of the day did not share this Liberal optimism—quite the contrary! Yet in terms of personal life, this Liberal tradition made society a pleasanter place to live in; and in terms of literature it was always there, as part of the framework, even if only as a tradition to be opposed.

Today, however, after the Second World War, the comfort of this tradition is gone and nothing else as yet has filled the gap. This may be the age of the Welfare State, but it is also that of the H bomb experiments—a fact which must imbue any highly individual gestures with a slight air of futility. At the same time, as far as young writers are concerned, it is the age of swift development in films, radio, TV, of international magazines and fellowships and public bodies, and the comforting invitation they extend to young intellectuals to take a half-technical job and be half-swallowed in the maw.

All these are commonplace observations, yet when added up they do suggest how doubly or trebly hard it must be for a young writer of today to catch the reflection of this age in creative writing, and, secondly, how swiftly the literary climates of the twenties and thirties have been superseded. Indeed, in the mind of some young writer of the 1950's the most drastic revaluations may already be going on. D. H. Lawrence? A poet and prose-writer of genius, no doubt, but his obsession that humanity needed a change in sexual outlook and that he, Lawrence, held the key to this change—surely this should have been recognised earlier as madness? Virginia Woolf? Certainly a writer of marvellous sensitivity, but for instance the overvaluation of an exclusive Bloomsbury circle in *The Waves*—wasn't that a bit snobby? T. E. Lawrence? A man of wonderful creative energy, no doubt, but did he really believe that he could achieve a Renaissance of the Arabs? The Arabs? Most odd! And so on: the task could be fascinating. And here, probably, Mr. Spender is justified in his strictures on English post-war writers. Creative writing is not something which can be conjured up at will; highly individual gestures may not be appropriate to the age; but that no young post-war iconoclasts have as yet come forward to set up new critical standpoints is more surprising, and argues for a certain lack either of distinction or enterprise. But this is a lack which may of course be rectified at any moment.

T. R. Fyvel

London, N.W.1

ON MORALS AND POLITICS

Sir—There seems to me to be some serious confusion in Salvador de Madariaga's review of *The Vocabulary of Politics* by T. D. Weldon and I trust I

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may be allowed in this letter to take the liberty of discussing some of his points.

Clearly the reviewer has not read some of the best works of analytical philosophers such as *The Concept of Mind* by Professor Ryle, R. M. Hare's little book on Ethics, or Maurice Cranston's book on Freedom, to name but three; nor does he seem to realise how differently these philosophers often tackle the same problem, obtaining significantly different results, since he appears to think that all philosophers whose method of approaching philosophical problems can be described as that of linguistic analysis, are bound to arrive at the same results when considering the same problem, and that to expose the weakness of any particular example of such analysis entails exposing the futility of linguistic analysis as such as far as this problem is concerned. This is the equivalent of saying that because thousands of art scholars practise art connoisseurship and are often called upon to make attributions on stylistic grounds, they are all bound to make the same attribution when considering the same work of art, and that if they are wrong in a particular case the whole principle of art connoisseurship is vitiated.

What linguistic philosophy achieves is the clarification of thought by examining the instruments of thought, and such examination often gives rise to some delightfully civilised intellectual gymnastics into the bargain. Philosophers have no moral or political axes to grind, and what personal views they may express have nothing to do with their method. To say that philosophers ought not to apply these methods to the political or moral slogans or catchphrases which excite the enthusiasm of Madariaga, and are bandied about by politicians or moralists in our newspapers and other organs of propaganda, is outrageous, and quite contrary to Madariaga's own beloved principle of Freedom.

But let us take two examples of linguistic analysis mentioned by the reviewer, whose invalidity he purports to expose; "'This beer is good,'" says Weldon, "is only superficially like 'this beer is cold,' since we test the truth of 'this beer is cold' with a metrical device called a thermometer,but no similar procedure will do in the case of 'this beer is good.'" "So you see," says Madariaga, "you only know that your beer is cold because the thermometer says so." *But this is not what Weldon said.* What he said was that you *test* the truth of "this beer is cold" with a thermometer, and the need to do this would only arise in a *dispute*. Somebody comes into the pub out of a snow-storm with frozen hands and *disagrees* with you that the beer is cold, as it *seems* warm to him, but he is prepared to retract if the thermometer proves that the beer is of a temperature which is *generally called cold*. But this cannot be done in the case of "this beer is good"; if there were dispute about *this*, one side might eventually be converted by the arguments of the other, but the question could not be decided by appeal to some 'good-measuring' *device*. Returning to Madariaga we are now treated to a metaphysical disquisition on perceiving goodness and coldness: "both," he says, "are primary and vital, and what goes for *good* in beer goes for good in all senses, and for *just* and *true*. What this book is blind about is that there are first values that man senses, feels, perceives, creates; in one word lives naturally and universally."

But if we want to think seriously about the logical differences between "this beer is good," and "this beer is cold," we cannot do better than appeal to Mr. Hare, who points out that to say of something that it is good, is always to *commend* it; that it is bad to *condemn* it; whereas to say that it is cold, big, square, dappled, etc., is neither necessarily to commend nor condemn it, but is to say something descriptive about it, which is testable in generally recognised ways. It is thus important to realise that we do not "perceive" goodness at all; we perceive certain qualities in an object "x" and *commend* x for having those qualities by using some such statement as "x is good." We cannot be asked to *prove* that x is good, but we may be asked *why* we call x good, and we answer by pointing out the qualities whose presence in x has led us to commend it.

But we come to a much more serious error when the reviewer deals with such a statement as "all men are equal," which is his "properly formulated" version of Weldon's "all men are created free and equal." I submit that for intelligent people who examine this sentence impartially, it is quite obviously meaningless. If it is not, what does it mean? If it is a metaphysical proposition nothing empirical can follow from it, and consequently, nothing about how people ought to be treated. If it is supposed to be logically true, then it must be equivalent to "all men are men," which is about as inspiring as "all tigers are tigers." But if it is empirical it is clearly false. So where are we?—the answer is that such pseudo-statements are simply political slogans, arrived at by transforming, by a linguistic sleight-of-hand, a value-judgement such as "all men ought to be treated equally in certain respects," into a pseudo-statement designed to have the best of three worlds —the infallibility of a logically true proposition; the mysterious finality and emotive appeal of a metaphysical utterance; and the consequences of a statement of empirical fact. For what it is absolutely crucial to understand is that value-judgements are not deducible from statements which do not contain

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value-words. The social and moral values of a society, as they are revealed in behaviour, reflect the degree of civilisation of that society, and people are civilised before they start casting around for principles by which they (pointlessly and fruitlessly) seek to "justify" their behaviour. The expression "cruelty is wrong" neither explains nor justifies abstention from cruelty, since people must first have been sufficiently civilised not to be cruel, before it occurred to them to annunciate a "moral dictum" by appeal to which they sought to justify this form of self-control.

Of course it is true that higher civilisations try to impose their values on lower ones with the aid of such hortative devices as these, just as within a single society more highly civilised groups try to impose their higher standards on the less civilised groups by similar means. But the value of these linguistic expressions is purely emotive, and it is a noteworthy contribution to human thought that linguistic philosophers have shown that this is so.

RICHARD HUGHES-HALLETT

London, W.8

SIR—Mr. Salvador de Madariaga quoted from T. D. Weldon's *The Vocabulary of Politics:*

> All attempts to demonstrate the superiority of the foundations on which democracy rests to those of communism and totalitarianism are pointless,

and from this, he concludes

> So we are left with the comforting thought that, although we live better in the colleges of Oxford than in the concentration camps of Karaganda, it certainly cannot be due to the fact that our beliefs are sounder or better founded than those of the Bolsheviks. . . .

And he accuses Weldon of equating "Kolima and Karaganda with Princeton and Oxford, and Truman with Stalin."

But this is a complete travesty and injustice. (1) Weldon's objection was against the appeal to *foundations* to justify different political systems (pp. 84–7). He had made it clear that he wanted to discard some unnecessary, metaphysical if you like, lumber. "Indeed, it is only when this is done that one can see at all clearly what are the genuine grounds of disagreements between communists and democratic politicians and give at least some indication of the way in which political appraisals are made" (p. 15). (2) Weldon devotes two chapters (out of six) to showing how this onslaught against political metaphysics is not selling the pass for intellectual anarchy and nihilism, how in fact we may find *genuine* points of disagreements. (3) Weldon had anticipated this form of attack:

> The criticism I have directed against traditional political institutions will seem shocking to many readers. Even those who feel that there may be something in it may consider that it is ill-timed and in poor taste. . . . It is therefore a kind of intellectual treason to suggest that there are no such foundations and that what have been supposed to be the foundations of our political institutions are not really foundations at all. . . . Put bluntly, what this comes to is "If you haven't got a way of life to recommend to your readers and some philosophical arguments with which to support it, you had much better keep quiet . . ." (p. 144).

And *this is exactly what Madariaga restates as* criticism! This is bad enough but when he ignores Weldon's conclusions we have to make a decision whether he has read the book or if he has understood it or if he has deliberately misread it, or all three. (4) Let us look at Weldon's own conclusions:

> Now it is clear that "is the British legal system a good institution?" "Is it superior to that of the USSR?" are not philosophical questions. Almost everyone would admit that we cannot even begin to answer them without a prolonged study of the way in which the two systems work both in theory and practice. "Is communism superior to democracy?" looks easier but in fact it is not. Obviously all of us have not the time or the opportunity to go into such questions in detail, yet we cannot avoid taking sides, so what is to be done? In fact the situation is not alarming. Each of us has his own tests, which are no doubt rough and crude, but they will serve their purpose, which is to check and confirm the conclusions of experts based on thorough research. My own are approximately as follows: (1) Does the political system under consideration censor the reading of those who are subject to it and impose restrictions on teaching? (2) Does it maintain that any political or other principles are immutable and therefore beyond criticism? (3) Does it impose restrictions on the intercourse of its members with those who live under different systems . . . ? (4) Do the rulers of the associations which has these institutions find most of their supporters among the illiterate, the uneducated, and the superstitious . . . ?

Not a hint of this appears in Madariaga's criticism.

ROY WILKIE

Old Aberdeen

IN DEFENCE OF SWEDEN

SIR—It is perhaps ungrateful to say anything but thank you to the "inimitable Mikes," if only because one hears far too little about the Scandinavian

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countries; but one would remind him that, during the war and especially in early 1942, the Swedes were not "well fed on thick steaks": their ration was less than the German ration. Nevertheless they made it their job to feed Finland and, to a lesser extent, Norway. They gave exceedingly generous help to all the occupied countries. If the Swedes are disliked by the Norwegians and the Finns, it is for very much the same reasons, mostly historical, for which the English are disliked by the Irish. Most of the good qualities which Mr. Mikes noticed in Norway are to be found in Finland and Sweden as well. Finland, however, was the first Scandinavian hero: always has been, probably always will be.

CONSTANCE MALLESON

Sundborn, Sweden

THE "GOOD AMERICAN"

SIR—. . . I do not know how long Mr. Fiedler (March 1954) was subjected to his Italian ordeal, which he thinks causes his nightmares, but his remarks remind me of a cruel but true question an American reporter once asked a distinguished American visitor to Germany soon after the last war's end. The Distinguished Visitor had not seen Germany in many years, although he had the temerity to hold a press conference in Frankfurt immediately after he had been driven from the airport to his hotel. After remarking on Germany's internal affairs in detail, the Distinguished Visitor called for questions, and the first one was: "Sir, could you tell us what else the taxi driver told you about Germany on the way from the airport?"

Probably I have moved in the wrong circles in Europe during the past seven years, but within my limited range, the remarks of Mr. Fiedler have no imaginable relationship with reality. . . . The principal European criticism that I have noted is that we Americans are too conformist and the only effort we need is to prove the contrary by our own actions. Barbara Ward wrote with accuracy more than a year ago that future political parties of the democracies would be divided between the totalitarians and those who believed in, and fought for, liberty and human dignity. We should be far more preoccupied with the danger signals which prompt distinguished American diplomats, now retired, to warn that certain political Hitlers are trying to create an American Foreign Service more in line with a totalitarian state than a democracy. I am quite sure we shall deal with this threat as we have with others, because the United States is a fundamentally sound democracy.

No, Mr. Fiedler would be more useful trying to see that justice is understood within America without trying to impose his brand of justice on others. . . .

WILLIAM H. WISE

Paris

THE KINSEY REPORTS

SIR—. . . I feel that Mr. Gorer's chief worry with regard to the Kinsey reports (March 1954) is not so much the propaganda for legal and social changes arising from them as the fact that the biological approach may appear to threaten certain deeply imbedded and long-cherished ideas of human dignity and the motivations of personality. This was also the case when Darwin's theory of evolution was put forward, while much of the criticism levelled at Freud's work has been to a similar effect—namely that higher forms of motivation, ideal and abstract values such as truth, love of justice, etc., have been ignored. While it may be better for some people's self-respect if they should think themselves descended from gods rather than apes, and if their sexual activities should be euphemised as "love" rather than release of psycho-physiological tensions, this is scarcely a valid criticism of a scientific work. Love, ethics, and the spiritual refinements will always merit their own non-scientific exponents, as the biological scientist would be the first to admit.

RONALD HALL

University of Bristol

MARX AND BUDDHA

SIR—In a footnote to his article on Japan (November 1953), Mr. Melvin J. Lasky says of Burma: "The young nation is today a Marxist state."

No intelligent person could be in Burma a week without noting the strong anti-Communist bias in newspapers, radio, and parliamentary and public speeches. Over 90 per cent of the people are Theravadin Buddhists and, having lived among them as a Buddhist Bhikkhu (monk) for nearly a year, I can affirm that Buddhism is diametrically opposed to Dialectical Materialism or Marxism.

What seems to have distorted the vision of your American contributor is Burmese resentment of American interference and propaganda. In this respect India and Ceylon are equally "bolshy."

KEVALANANDA

London, S.W.3 (Bhikkhu)

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BOOKS

THE DETACHED VISION

It is the measure of how nearly the voice of poetry has been silenced that we require all utterances to be 'messages' and great men to be 'law-givers.' Oracular pronouncement is expected from every seedy politician, and even the poor don is not exempt. Burckhardt himself has been credited with a 'message': he has been recognised as a fortune-teller whose predictions have either come true or are on the way to being fulfilled; and, I suppose, the *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen* was the occasion of this recognition. That this should have happened in Germany in the early thirties in respect of a book already known there for a generation, is not altogether surprising. Circumstances then called attention to things Burckhardt had written half a century earlier, and *aut prophetes aut nullus* has long been the rule among that perplexed people. And when in 1943 the book was translated into English as *Reflections on History*, perhaps our mood also encouraged us to listen only for the voice of prophecy: the innocent delight with which the schoolboy long ago discovered and devoured the *Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* was suppressed by a censorious memory. Nevertheless, it was a mistake, an intellectual disorder; and Mr. Alexander Dru, in his selection and translation of some of Burckhardt's letters,* has provided English readers with a much needed specific.

For what the *Letters* reveal is not a man with a 'message,' but a man keenly aware of what was afoot in his time and blessed with resources which enabled him to accommodate himself to his situation; not a visionary (like Nietzsche) who came and saw, was disgusted, said so and made known the cure, but a man who meditated much upon the scene before him and, when he found it not altogether to his liking, remained not indifferent but unperturbed. In short, the Burckhardt who appears here is something much more significant than the messenger he was being turned into: a character admirable for its integrity and restraint, and one supremely adapted to its situation. "As a teacher and professor," he says (writing to Nietzsche in 1875), he understood his task to be that of "leading people on to acquire a personal possession of the past. . . . I wanted them to be capable of picking the fruits themselves; I never dreamt of training scholars and disciples in the narrower sense, but only wanted to make every member of my audience feel and know that everyone may and must appropriate those aspects of the past which appeal to him personally, and that there might be happiness in doing so." And his disposition as a teacher towards his pupils was also his disposition as a writer of books and of letters, whatever the topic he touched.

Situated at Basle as a professor of history and of the history of art, with connections in Germany, Italy, France, and England, he looked out upon the European scene, meditating upon what passed. There was much that he was glad not to be involved in; but there was little that did not have the power of drawing him to the window. The period of his observation covered the last six decades of the 19th century, and he must be counted as an observer not less acute than the best of his time—than, for example, de Tocqueville or Renan or Sorel

* *The Letters of Jacob Burckhardt*. Selected and translated by Alexander Dru. Routledge. 25s.

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—with a quality of his own that sprang from his temperament rather than from any acquired point of view or system of beliefs. In place of Nietzsche's or Dostoevsky's erratic and pathological sensitiveness, he displays a steady and lucid perception of the way things were going; he was 'weather-wise,' not on account of a rheumatic shoulder, but from the constant practice of observing the signs.

What he saw was not very much to his liking: it was the destruction of almost everything he valued most highly. He perceived a world in the grip of a passion for 'prosperity,' which sacrificed everything to "the *practical* sense of the nineteenth century." It was a world proliferating with desires and in love with luxury. But it was also a world in which actual prosperity was breeding a profound desire for 'security' and uniformity, a love of mediocrity and a deep hostility to everything that was not commonplace. It was from these roots that he saw "the coming age of barbarism" springing up. This, I think, was an acute observation; only Sorel perceived this subtle change of mood from 'prosperity' to 'security' as clearly as Burckhardt and saw where it might lead—to "an era of wars." But further, what might to some extent have mitigated this movement—government—was beginning to suffer the same corruption. "Politics are at last entering upon a great new phase and have become 'the peoples' politics'." Nevertheless "the century is not made for genuine democracy"; the authority of governments having disintegrated, what was taking its place was the exercise of naked power. But, as he observed, the source of power was now the masses, who consequently were becoming the new despots. But the 'despotism' of the masses is a back-handed sort of despotism; they are helpless despots without initiative of their own. What is being imposed upon the world is not the desires and beliefs of the masses, for they have none and wait to be informed about what to believe and what to desire, being moved only by a disposition to demand that "something shall always be happening, otherwise they don't believe 'progress' is going on." These *rois fainéants* fall into the hands of "the first swine who comes along" to tell them what to think and then to speak in their name, of 'leaders' who seek and win power by fulfilling (or pretending to fulfil) expectations that they themselves have provoked. And the end of it all is the collapse of this tyrant mass, whose passion for uniformity and security delivers them into the hands of the rulers they have themselves evoked. Writing in 1870 of Germany Burckhardt observes: "After people had been played about with for two decades and always egged on to will and to want something, suddenly a really first-class 'willer' appeared at Sadowa; and since then, exhausted by their former effort of will, they have collapsed at his feet and want what he wants and just thank God that there is someone to give them the direction." And in this manner, the military machine becomes the model of all government, the vocabulary of war imposes itself upon politics, and an exclusive passion for 'security' generates absolute insecurity.

BUT what makes these observations interesting is not that, read as predictions, they have in some part been fulfilled in the 20th century, but that, as Burckhardt understood them, they were merely reports of a situation before his eyes. He was not concerned with anything so nebulous as the 'trend of events,' because he knew that events are the product of such complicated circumstances that fortune-telling about them was scarcely worth while. He admits to a *penchant* to 'prophesying,' but he is not at all surprised when events rebuff his forecasts: it is remarkable how often, in these letters, he expects outbreaks of war which did not happen. To find in him a man who made some guesses, lucky or profound, about the way things were going is to mistake what he said. And to consider him wise because we have permitted to happen what he thought might happen is to pay ourselves an undeserved compliment through him.

Events he regarded as contingencies, never with certainty to be foreseen. What could however be observed, studied, and understood were the propensities of the situation. And, although propensities are to be gathered from events, they are neither proved nor disproved by events. Moreover, it is just as interesting to observe the discrepancies between propensities and events as it is to observe the illustration of propensities in events. "Italy wanting to be a great power and a centralised military state," he observes in 1878, "is such a colossal untruth that it is bound to incur punishment step by step." All, then, that Burckhardt said might remain true and significant even if the 20th

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century had never known two world wars and the appearance of the so-called welfare state.

Now, whatever value we place upon Burckhardt's observations, the fact remains that the situation in Europe was very little to his taste. Yet throughout his writings he preserved an extraordinary equanimity. And to those who take a not dissimilar view of the situation the secret of his equanimity is something to be curious about. Indeed, it is in this connection that he is credited with a 'message.'

In such a situation, equanimity might spring from sheer delight in decay (as Venice today can impose calm upon the observer, provoking neither regret nor disappointment), or from a belief that this is a particularly puzzling section of the spiral of 'progress,' or from absence of interest in anything topical or transitory, from a belief in providence, from a doctrine of fatalism, or from an arrogant conviction that one has a remedy. But Burckhardt's *aequanimitas* sprang from none of these sources. It was not that he had "hung up philosophy" as unequal to the situation: he never needed it. His resources lay, not in a theory or a faith, but in his temperament and his character. And what is remarkable is how early in life he found his character (almost as he came of age), how faithful he was to it, and how faultlessly he managed it. There is as little of the twice-born in Burckhardt as there is in Montaigne. At the age of twenty-one he speaks of his attitude as one of resignation; and as an old man, in spite of the vision of a Europe disposed more and more to fall into the hands of *terribles simplificateurs*, he says: "How the younger generation will survive, and build its nest, is something which, seeing the complete inconstancy of things, one ought not to worry too much about." And on another occasion he says: "My attitude is willy-nilly ironical."

THESE, however, are constructions, rationalisations. The truth is that Burckhardt and his circumstances were so exactly matched that, in order to avoid dismay, he needed only to remain faithful to himself. He grew up with his times; they presented him with a situation, but with no problem, no dilemma: life could not have been less a predicament for Burckhardt, and therefore he has no 'message.' If the world were disposed to collapse, then, not belief, but courage was required; courage that exhibits itself first in a very modest view of one's own importance and of the importance of the present state of the world, and secondly in a determination to enjoy while enjoyment is still possible, to preserve in oneself the remnants of a civilised life, to encourage others to do the same, and to give shelter to what might be allowed to reappear if events in the future took a different turn. This, as Burckhardt early understood, entailed a certain asceticism, an Epicurean detachment from "the enormously expensive life of the great cities and from the horrific luxury to which official literature and art are falling victim"; and he was able to achieve this detachment without any feeling of tension or resentment: it was a tactic, not a protest. He gave no hostages to his circumstances, and could disregard their pressure. In short, the secret of Burckhardt's equanimity is not, as has been suggested elsewhere, an unacknowledged dependence on the resources of Christian belief, or indeed on faith of any sort (even the belief that other times had been better or that there was a good time coming), but simply nerve—the nerve "to hold life here and now in no higher esteem than it deserves," and yet to enjoy it. This character (its counterpart is to be found in Montaigne and in Vauvenargues), in which charity has survived the disappearance of faith and hope, is neither a *nostrum* to be peddled nor even a model capable of being copied; it is a spectacle to be observed and admired, even venerated: to be equal to one's fortune and not to be humiliated by want of greater perfection is a rare achievement. Burckhardt possessed this character in a high degree and remarkably little qualified by the defects of coldness, egoism, and pride to which it is subject. He did not, of course, scorn small helps; it is a difficult character to sustain continuously, and he was lucky to find in Italy something to support it. But he was an *âme forte*, with none of the neurotic disposition that clutches at one support after another, resentful of ill-fortune, self-pitying, rocketing from optimism to pessimism and back again, and dependent in the end upon the illusion that the worst cannot happen. Yet this character remained in him a 'gift,' which he never worked up into a 'philosophy'; and therefore *his* gift is an 'image' and not a 'message.'

BUT, after all, Burckhardt was not only an observer of the contemporary scene; he was a scholar and an historian. And the *Letters*

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reveal him to have been acutely aware of his particular talents, and to have been content to cultivate them without wishing they were larger or other than they were. Here, also, was equanimity. And what is interesting to observe is how even his technique as an historian is *naïve*, not an acquisition but generated from his native cast of mind and accepted without misgiving. In a pretentious man, or in one less gifted, this might have led to disaster; but in him the result justified the incaution of following "the way that came naturally" to him.

Burckhardt had learned from Ranke, but he was a pupil who took only what he knew how to use. He recognised (even at the age of twenty-four) that his *métier* did not lie in the patient establishment of an obscure course of events. He did not despise this sort of engagement, but he knew it was not for him. And further, from the beginning of his life to the end of it, he disclaimed any faculty for philosophical reflection or abstract thought. "I never," he says, "had any thought that was not connected with something external." Consequently, both the paths that lay before the historian at that time were closed to him: the paths of *historismus* where Ranke led; and the path of speculation, muddied by the tramplings of the Hegelians, but still distinguishable and still respectable.

But, as a young man, he discovered in himself a propensity for 'reverie,' of which he became 'wary,' fearing that he might fall a victim to it. But turning to history as an escape, he found a remedy, in which what he had taken for a disease was transformed into an activity appropriate to his peculiar talents and which he could engage in without misgiving. "I can do nothing unless I start from contemplation (*Anschauung*)," he says; and what he means by 'contemplation' is 'reverie' upon which order and direction has been imposed by scholarly habits. When he writes of this activity there are acknowledged echoes of Schopenhauer; and it was a word Goethe had been fond of, meaning by it an intuitive mental process in which the general was discerned in the particular. And these connections lead Burckhardt to understand history as "for the greater part, poetry," and even to venture upon a speculative identification of history and poetry. But this is not the direction in which we need follow him: history as contemplation has a

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much more immediate spring in Burckhardt, and ends in something much less high falutin'.

"My entire historical work," he says, "like my passion for travel, my mania for natural scenery and my interest in art, springs from an enormous thirst for contemplation." Burckhardt's genius lay in seeing and in making images. And when he turned to history as an escape from 'reverie,' he turned, not away from images, but towards more substantial and more coherent images that gave him greater satisfaction. And to assert that history is poetry was to assert, not a general theory, but an attitude native to himself. Moreover, since the activity which he felt to belong to him was *Anschauung*, its pursuit led not to a narrative in which the past appeared as a succession of pictures and to vulgar 'pictorial' writing, but to the composition of *a* picture, the realisation of *an* image. He searched always for the picture, the image which the *facta* composed, and he speaks of the discovery of this image as the "prize," the reward of contemplation. But what he was in search of was not a mere generality, but the propensities of a situation, and the *facta* were used as the evidences of these propensities. In short, what he looked for, and was interested in, in the past was what held his attention in the present—not a course of events, but the dispositions revealed in events. And as an historian, what he has left us are studies of the characters of two ages—Renaissance Italy and the Age of Constantine the Great—in which events are presented as emblems of the propensities of these situations. And for his pupils, his lectures were, as Wölflin (his successor at Basle) said, "lessons in contemplation."

Burckhardt as an observer of the contemporary scene and Burckhardt as an historian are, then, the same man—a profoundly thoughtful man, but one who owed as small a debt as may be to theory. His virtues were his own; there was nothing in him that was not first-hand. And the springs of his intellectual activity were, in both respects, almost physical. His contemplation began as an activity of the eye, began in his delight in the sights of the world, and from this he composed his images. Similarly his moral attitude began in the nerve to enjoy what still remained to be enjoyed, without bitterness or complaint on account of its evanescence. He knew a barbarian when he saw one, and he believed the situation to be disposed towards barbarism; but his judgements were, as an historian's should be, appraisals and not imputations.

Michael Oakeshott

ABSENCE IN REALITY

Most English readers, if asked to appoint a triumvirate of living American-born poets, would, I imagine, cast Mr. Robert Frost for the somewhat ungrateful role of Lepidus to the Augustus and Antony of Mr. Eliot and Mr. Pound. I am told that Americans themselves, however, would be likely to prefer another candidate, Mr. Wallace Stevens, a selection of whose poems has recently appeared for the first time under a British imprint.* The occasion can hardly be called premature. Mr. Stevens is in his seventy-fifth year, and though in no sense a prolific writer, has a solid body of verse to his credit which, in so far as the virtues of integrity and intelligence are concerned, has nothing to fear by comparison with that of Augustus or Antony. Of the present volume, I shall content myself with saying that the selection is made by the author himself; that it is, moreover, a selection that I do not think could be bettered either as to representation or as to quality; that the volume is as pleasant to read and handle as one would expect of its publishers; and that anyone who is interested in the face of contemporary poetry should obviously provide himself with a copy undeterred or unencouraged by whatever the mere critic may have to say—and pass on to that aspect of Mr. Stevens' work which interests me most directly: his theory of poetry as expressed in the poems themselves.

Indeed a carping critic might add that the

* *Selected Poems.* By Wallace Stevens. Faber and Faber. 12s. 6d.

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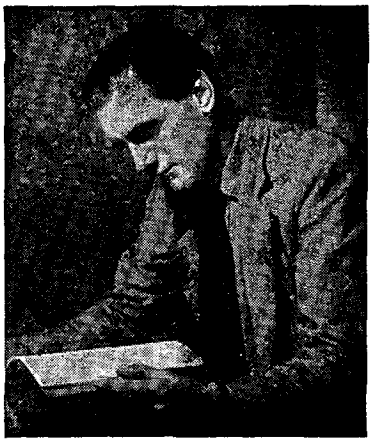
Tim Carew



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poet has expressed precious little else. Two of the longest and finest pieces, *The Man with the Blue Guitar* and *Notes towards a Supreme Fiction*, are explicitly concerned with just this; and although many of the other poems do not ostensibly concern themselves with "poetry"—most of the early ones in particular are, rather, Imagist in the manner of early Pound or of Amy Lowell—nevertheless it is, I think, fair to say that all Mr. Stevens' work is philosophical, and that in the narrowest sense; so that if birds, bees, flowers, and trees appear in the poems, then they are not *real* birds and so on, but *ideas* of birds used as counters in some grand æsthetic *Kriegspiel*: and that this philosophy, this æsthetic, are of that sort which postulates a world the nature of whose experience and method of working are precisely the poetic experience and method. A Stevens' poem is, typically, a poem about how Mr. Stevens is writing the poem in which he is explaining how he is writing it:

> *Poëtry is the subject of the poem,*
> *From this the poem issues and*
> *To this returns. Between the two,*
> *Between issue and return, there is*
> *An absence in reality,*
> *Things as they are. Or so we say.*

It is of course a closed circle. Normally speaking, we properly understand and enjoy poetry in proportion as we have direct experience or intuition of what the poet is talking about. In order to understand and enjoy the "Ode to a Nightingale," it is an advantage to have been oneself at some time "half in love with easeful death." In order to understand and enjoy Mr. Stevens, on the other hand, it is an advantage to have . . . read the poetry of Mr. Stevens, for what other experience or intuition does it recognise? The poems' "absence in reality" seems to me an absence indeed. Whatever coinage is brought back from that journey, it is not passed intact by the customs at the frontier of the mind, but substituted for by ideas, tokens, symbols, values, paper-money, at a consistent but largely arbitrary rate of exchange. Within that closed country these of course pass current, and if we are willing to enter it we find that, in terms of itself, the country is rich. But entering it in order to see the external world more clearly, is walking for the benefit of the prospect into a hall of mirrors. I believe that a diametrically opposite view of the nature of poetry is more nearly the true one: that reality issues from itself into an "absence in poetry" and then returns to reality again.

We shall be disappointed therefore if we go to Mr. Stevens in the expectation that he will throw light on anything whatsoever, except in so far as the casting of doubt may qualify for that description. He is an æsthetician of the most abstract sort, and a philosopher of that Berkleian persuasion whose principal concern is to undermine the observed at the expense of the observer. But this is not in the least to say that that prime function of poetry, the communication of pleasure, is also "absent in reality." Once he has taken the purely volitional step over the frontier into this "self-delighting, self-appeasing, self-affrighting" world of the poet, the reader will find that many sorts of pleasure await him—and if they are all purely intellectual pleasures, the poet has his defences for it:

> *Life consists*
> *In propositions about life*

and

> *What is there in life except one's ideas?*

One of the chief of these pleasures derives, as I have already suggested, from the poet's extraordinary consistency in both attitude and imagery. Each poem interrelates richly and complexly with all the others, and indeed only takes on its full meaning in the light of their implicit comments upon it (thus Mr. Stevens anthologises even less happily than most, poems rich in their settings showing up small dry and colourless out of them, as pebbles out of the sea). The reader has then all the excitement and pleasure of learning a new language; and then the further pleasure of watching an argument conducted in it about the nature of the language itself, an argument, moreover, which in any other language it would not have been possible to conduct. It is something of a jig-saw pleasure, and something of a cross-word pleasure also—

> *The poem must resist the intelligence*
> *Almost successfully,*

and it is indeed in this very overcoming of the resistance, in (one might say) "the seduction" of the poem that the especial pleasure of "difficult" poetry may be said to lie.

As to the nature of the æsthetic argument itself, Mr. Stevens is Coleridge come back to do the job properly. He is the extreme true

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romantic of the subjective idealistic type, more and not less subjective than, say, Wordsworth who, also dealing with much the same material (the nature, origin, and operation of his own poetic gift), chose to present it comparatively objectively, in the philosophic sense, by means of the external, "real" events of his own life. The style of the modern writer's verse—dry, laconic, with little odd lapses into brassiness—should not blind us to this essential affiliation.

The private language, however consistent in itself, has nevertheless its own dangers and difficulties. These lie, as I have suggested, in its arbitrary nature. By "fiction," for example, Mr. Stevens would have us understand "truth," especially "poetic truth"—

Poetry is the supreme fiction, madame

—and there is certainly a context in which we may accept the paradox as a valid one. But it is a dangerous game; once opposites are to be thus conscripted into equivalents, we begin to lose all steady grasp upon our points of reference. The *Notes towards a Supreme Fiction*, for instance, are divided into three sections—"It must be Abstract," "It must Change," "It must give Pleasure": but "Perhaps," the once-bitten reader cries, "*perhaps* Mr. Stevens may mean this to mean that it must be Concrete, Static, or even Unpleasant. . . ." The workman is wise to keep his eye on the object he is constructing, not on his tool, and not on his hands, or he may find the tool turned back on itself and his fingers knotted in circles.

So too the poet, in hot pursuit of his abstract quarry, may frequently overlook the merely everyday connotations of his chosen symbols, thus producing combinations that, however proper and sober in their philosophic senses, appear to the uninvolved reader simply ludicrous or misleading. Add to this certain extraordinary failures of ear, and we get lines like

Unsnack your snood, madanna, for the stars
Are shining on all brows of Neversink

or

Castratos of moon-mash

or

Large-mannered motions to his mythy mind.

Even Mr. Stevens' most frequently anthologised and, in a sense, most successful poems seem to me to be by no means free from this kind of thing: the opening of "Bantams in Pine-Woods":

Chieftain Iffucan of Azcan in caftan
Of tan with henna hackles, halt!

is, one pessimistically feels, intended to exhilarate the reader with a cheerful and complex music, but it is surely only the naïvest of ears that could derive much continued pleasure from it.

Finally, the "private language" lays the poet open to what is certainly not a fault, but as certainly a major misfortune—the dry-mouthed belling of the analyst-critic pack. If (*absit omen!*) the value of a poem is directly proportional to the wealth of verbal and semantic analysis that can be lavished upon it, then Mr. Stevens is the finest of poets and there's many a fine thesis all the way from Sackett's Harbor to Sacramento to prove it. An injustice? Certainly: but it is a sort of poetic injustice. And the paradoxical Mr. Stevens would surely allow that "injustice" is perhaps in the end only a sort of "justice" after all.

HOTHOUSE to wild-garden. For me, Mr. Stevens' collection is entirely overshadowed by the appearance of the *Collected Poems of Charlotte Mew*,* now first issued, together with an admirable biographical memoir by Mrs. Harold Monro and a portrait frontispiece. No one and nothing could be further removed from the person and work of the last writer. The two poets use the same language and share, to a limited extent, a tradition: but beyond that they have not even a sex in common. At first glance it might appear that, as far as poetic purposes are concerned, these differences would operate to Charlotte Mew's disadvantage. There are admittedly writers whose private lives and personalities throw little light on their writings (and Mr. Stevens is one of them); but in her case the person and the poetry are one, and it is the oddest of characters that Mrs. Monro has to present. Born in 1869, the poetess—tiny, bird-headed, iron-haired, bright-eyed, tweed-suited, velvet-collared, Oxford bow-ed and porkpie-hatted, just failing all her life long to keep up appearances—inhabited in extremely "reduced circumstances" the family home in Bloomsbury, together with a shrivelled and

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even tinier "Ma," a sister Anne who painted firescreens, and a ninety-year-old parrot with a festering claw. A third sister and only brother of this somewhat Brontë-ish household languished in insane asylums, and Charlotte and Anne had vowed themselves to chastity in order not to pass on the hereditary taint. Charlotte's own principles were so rigid that she was prepared to break off a life-long friendship at the least hint of sexual "irregularity" in the other. After the death of Anne in 1928, Charlotte's own reason became partly affected and she died by her own hand.

From this unhappy, enclosed, and haunted life, what poetry might be expected to come? Gentlewomanly landscapes, or ballads about cavaliers or fairies, or at best over-excited emotions brashly expressed? In timid, second-hand conventional techniques and forms, or perhaps in "free verse" with no form at all? Perhaps, if the gods were temporarily indulgent, a lucky-strike lyric and a little period charm? Nothing could be further from the actuality. Charlotte Mew is one of the most original and inventive of poets, her forms strong and entirely individual; her forte is the long semi-dramatic poem, in which she shows a control and sense of balance and effect that are quite astonishing; and her most successful subjects are such matters as "Madeleine in Church" (a prostitute's colloquy with the Virgin) or "The Fête" (a boy's first sexual experience). A single poem by "queer lonely unhappy" Miss Mew tells us more about human beings and their relationships, one to another, more about this world we live in, more about "reality," than the whole corpus of Mr. Stevens' writings. Nor do her advantages stop there: I am not at all sure that she does not exceed in what might appear at first to be the other's own peculiar province, that is, "intelligence"—both negatively, in declining to ask the fundamental questions that it is more circumspect for the creative artist not to (if Coleridge had been this wise, we should have had another *Ancient Mariner* and the rest of *Christabel*); and positively, in that the construction of her poems displays an intuitional grasp of her material so much more logical than his mere logic.

It is obviously difficult to support this sort of contention by short quotation, when the test of this organising intelligence is its ability to deal with the longer poem; but here is most of the closing stanza of "The Fête," a poem of about 150 lines:

I wish I had gone back home today;
I should have watched the light that so gently dies
From our high window, in the Paris skies,
The long, straight chain
Of lamps hung out along the Seine:
I would have turned to her and let the rain
Beat on her breast as it does against the pane;—
Nothing will be the same same again;—
There is something strange in my little Mother's eyes,
There is something new in the old heavenly air of Spring—
The smell of beasts, the smell of dust—The Enchanted Thing!
All my life long I shall see moonlight on the fern
And the black trunks of trees. Only the hair
Of any woman can belong to God.
The stalks are cruelly broken where we trod,
There had been violets there,
I shall not care
As I used to do when I see the bracken burn.

Most of Charlotte Mew's excellences are to be seen here: the intricate ode-like stanzas, the subtle rhythms, the very characteristic "long lines," the gift for epigram ("Only the hair/ Of any woman can belong to God"), the technique of juxtaposition of plain statements in such a way that the reader himself is lured into providing the poetic links between them.

Which is not to say that Charlotte Mew has not her faults. She has several, and they are all exceedingly plain ones—the weak phrases, the lapses into bathos or into sentimentality, the most unhappy attempts on contemporary slang. But I feel that as faults they are particularly unimportant, arising rather out of her circumstances than her nature; and if it is they that have so far prevented her from taking her proper place amongst this century's poets, I hope that their very obviousness may tend to disarm future criticism.

Charlotte Mew is a very impressive and, moreover, a very quotable poet; and especially skilful at providing alluring openings to her poems. "Rooms" begins:

I remember rooms that have had their part
In the steady slowing down of the heart.

And "Fame":

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Sometimes in the over-heated house, but
not for long
Smirking and speaking rather loud,
I see myself among the crowd,
Where no one fits the singer to his song.

It would be a dull man indeed who could let those openings by; and I hope they will seduce those who have not already done so into buying (or otherwise procuring) this very rewarding volume.

OF MANY other books of verse published recently, I have space only to mention two.

Mr. Richard Eberhart* is, I suggest, a good poet gone, at the moment, wrong. The poems look good on the page but fade in the mouth and mind for a variety of reasons, chief among which seems to me an entire absence of self-criticism or self-control. This leads him to write far too much, to publish far too soon, to express himself in uncouth, meaningless and disappointing verse-forms, to accept whatever comes into his mind and in whatever form of words it first clothes itself, and (I imagine) to reject nothing. The result of this hit-or-miss technique, as practised here by an essentially fine poetic mind, is a few poems which are almost magnificent but spoilt by weak, irrelevant, or crude patches and by being, mostly, three times as long as they have matter to be; a large number of pieces which are an inextricable *mélangerie* of the brilliant and the dull, and one or two which are surely amongst the worst poems of our time—

Christ, I have walked around your erection,
The Cross, that begot, upon a sky of prayer
A billion men, devoted in humility.

Yet this very badness is positive and active and proceeds from energy, and in a sense could only have been written by the very good poet that Mr. Eberhart might (if he would care to be) become.

The Toy Fair,* by Mr. Howard Moss, is an altogether slighter affair; but the contrast with Mr. Eberhart's volume is illuminating. Mr. Moss is quiet, very limited in scope, rather naïve for all the modest display of eruditional polish and mild *avant-garderie*: but his poems are (as Mr. Eberhart's are not) carefully worked out and carefully and sensitively written. He makes the utmost of his gifts and the result is unpretentious but satisfying.

Hilary Corke

* *Undercliff: Poems 1946–1953*. By RICHARD EBERHART. Chatto and Windus. 10s. 6d.

* *The Toy Fair*. By HOWARD MOSS. Charles Scribner's Sons. $2.50.

THE BIG THREE

IT was upon an American historian, Professor W. H. McNeill of the University of Chicago, that the choice fell to write for Chatham House's "Survey of International Affairs"* this study of co-operation and conflict between America, Britain, and Russia from the time of Pearl Harbour to the end of 1946. Other things being equal, it is probably an advantage that an account of Anglo-American war-time relations designed primarily for British readers should be written by an American; for an American is best qualified to explain those peculiarities of his country's political outlook and habits which the British observer so often finds it hard to understand. When it comes to interpreting Russian policy, however, it does not greatly matter whether the writer is British or American; the important thing is that he should have a thorough grasp of the ideology of that

* *America, Britain and Russia: their co-operation and conflict 1941–1946*. By William Hardy McNeill. Issued under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

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peculiar political organisation which controls the Soviet state. This is all the more essential because, as Professor McNeill himself points out, there are virtually no sources of information for the Soviet Union comparable to those available—in the form of published official documents, personal memoirs, records of parliamentary debates, and press comment—for throwing light on opinion, motives, and the making of policy in Britain and America over the period studied. Lacking any such evidence for the thoughts and intentions of Stalin as he has for those of Roosevelt and Churchill, the only profitable course for the historian to follow is to examine with care the writings of Lenin and Stalin intended for the edification of the Communist faithful, and to see how far Soviet actions can be explained by the beliefs and purposes there revealed.

Professor McNeill, however, does not seriously undertake this task. He admits that the Soviet government's actions "might be interpreted as the application, however tortuous, of Marxian principles." But his own preference is clearly for the alternative view that "the relations between the USSR and other states did not differ in any essential from the relations which normally prevailed between national and imperial states." This assumption—that "national self-interest and the self-interest of the ruling class or clique (as understood at the moment) guided all power-wielding groups"—has the advantage of enabling the historian to eliminate ideology from the picture and treat the contrasted policies as commensurable in motive. But instead of explaining Soviet policy, such approach only serves to make it more obscure, and Professor McNeill is reduced to speaking of Stalin as "an enigmatic ruler of an enigmatic people."

It is the more a pity that the author produces so much unnecessary mystification about Russia because his book is in many ways a most clarifying and valuable contribution to the history of the period. He has an outstanding capacity for sorting out the facts he needs to make a coherent and readable narrative, and we are efficiently guided through the maze of operational plans, negotiations, and conferences which belong to the story of war-time inter-Allied relations. We start with a picture of the world at the moment the Japanese bombers descended on Pearl Harbour, and go on to watch the unfolding of the American war effort, the beginning of lend-lease to Russia, the attempts to co-ordinate strategy, the controversies over the Second Front and over Churchill's Mediterranean projects, the disputes over the Soviet annexations of 1939–40 and over the governments of France and Poland, the endeavours to reach agreement about the future of Germany, the Big Three conferences at Teheran, Yalta, and Potsdam, and the post-war decline from an apparent unity of purpose to "open quarrels openly arrived at." The story is well told, and simply as a sequence of unexplained events it has an intensely dramatic quality. But the reader inevitably is not content to know what happened; he wants to know why events happened as they did, and particularly why the story had such an unhappy—and to most of the principal Western participants, unexpected—ending.

PROFESSOR McNeill is very anxious that nobody should accuse him of an illegitimate use of hindsight in the interpreting of events before 1947. He is proud of resisting an "almost irresistible" compulsion "to look at the war-time history in the light of what had come after, to search for signs and portents of the strained situation which had prevailed since 1946 or 1947, and to forget or minimise the 'open-endedness' of Allied relationships during the war years." He contends that "to suppose either that the outcome as it was known in 1952 was inevitable or that it was 'planned that way' by any of the Allied leaders or governments was surely fallacious." He admits that the ideology of Marxist-Leninism was "inimical" to co-operation with the West, that Roosevelt "failed to take adequately into account the enormous intellectual and moral gulf which divided him and the West generally from Stalin and Russia," and that "the principal architect of the Grand Alliance was not any Allied leader, but Hitler himself," without whom the partnership soon broke up. Nevertheless, in his account of negotiations from Potsdam onwards he gives the impression of a genuine co-operation breaking down through misunderstandings, suspicions, and quarrels which might have been avoided, and in which the fault was more or less equal on both sides.

Professor McNeill complains that it was "a misfortune that the effort at world pacification in 1945–46 should have been entrusted to men

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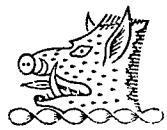

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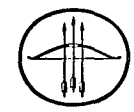

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so firmly rooted in their respective national backyards as Byrnes, Bevin, and Molotov were." But what were their "respective national backyards"? Molotov was a Bolshevik of the first hour, who nearly thirty years after the October Revolution was defending diplomatically the new extensions of Communist dictatorship brought about in several European countries through Soviet military occupation; Byrnes and Bevin represented two non-Communist countries which objected to this process, particularly since it was contrary to assurances they had previously been given. Had the conflicts been old-fashioned disputes of national interest over frontiers or economic concessions, there is no reason to suppose that the roots of the three men in their respective national backyards would have prevented them from reaching agreements in an old-fashioned diplomatic way. But, as the trouble was a clash of ideologies, which, on one side at any rate, were held to be opposed in ultimately mortal hostility, there could have been no friendly adjustment of the issues unless either Molotov had ceased to be a Communist or Byrnes and Bevin had been ready to accept the expansion of the Communist empire without resistance or protest.

WHEN a man has a lifelong ambition to possess a car but has to wait many years before he can afford to buy one, nobody argues that his failure to buy it before he actually did is proof that he had never previously had the intention of buying it. But such an argument is advanced by those who hold the view that relations between Russia and the West only really began to go wrong about the end of 1945, and that the establishment of Communist régimes outside the Soviet Union was the consequence rather than the cause of inter-Allied disagreements. For the discerning historian, however, what happened in 1945–46 was merely the fulfilment of a long-term political purpose which conditions had long rendered impossible, or too risky to attempt, but which the circumstances at the end of the Second World War—the complete elimination of German and Japanese power, the headlong demobilisation of American and British forces as soon as victory had been won, and the extraordinary incapacity of Western statesmen to see what was happening until it was a fully accomplished fact—suddenly made it safe and easy to attain.

After the Communist victory in the Russian civil war, nearly twenty years had passed without any further instalment of world revolution; none of the Comintern parties outside the Soviet Union had made a successful revolution, except to a limited extent in China; and Soviet armed forces had not been used to support Communists abroad except in the remote and inaccessible region of Outer Mongolia. During the whole of this period, the weakness of the Soviet Union, the general stability of non-Communist states, and the probability that any international revolutionary adventure would provoke an overwhelming coalition of hostile powers, certainly made Stalin's "socialism in one country" the policy of expediency and prudence. But it was a matter of tactics and not an unconditional alteration of aim; the basic doctrine of Marxism-Leninism was never repudiated. For Communists there never had to be any special reason for trying to extend the revolution; there had only to be a special reason for *not* trying to extend it.

During the war against Hitler, it seemed that the retreat from the original faith had reached its extreme point; in dependence for victory on Russian patriotic ardour and on American lend-lease, old-fashioned nationalism and co-operation with the West were the order of the day. Yet it was just in this period that decisive steps were taken to prepare for Communist revolution in the countries which would be occupied when victory was won. Communist radio stations for broadcasting propaganda against the Polish and Yugoslav governments-in-exile were set up in the Soviet Union, and, although they claimed to be functioning within Poland and Yugoslavia, their true location was known to the British and American governments. Within a month of the empty gesture of dissolving the Comintern, the Communist "Union of Polish Patriots" had been set up in Moscow with authority to enrol troops from former Polish prisoners in the Soviet Union. If Western statesmen had paid more attention to these moves and less to the bland assurances they received from Stalin and Molotov, they would not have been so surprised at the course events subsequently took. But at least they were being blind in 1943; there is less excuse for Professor McNeill to be blind in 1953.

G. F. Hudson

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ÆSTHETICS IN A NEW KEY

FROM this side of the Atlantic, one is sometimes tempted to divide American works of scholarship into two main classes: great thick books about one relatively small point, and great thick books about absolutely everything. At first sight, I did feel some temptation to put Suzanne K. Langer's new book *Feeling and Form** into the second class; but I should have been wrong to put it in that or either. It is certainly a very serious and comprehensive system of æsthetic thinking, but it is beautifully articulated around the problem from which Mrs. Langer starts. She writes philosophy in this book as she claims it ought to be written: beginning with concrete problems and generalising only on the basis of their analysis and solution. As she points out, an enormous amount of æsthetic theory begins with vague and general concepts like Beauty, Value, or Culture, whose proper place, if anywhere, is only at the end. Hers is a kind of morphological approach. By analysing a practical problem of artistic creation, she reveals its structure and implications, and by analogy a system is built up and begins to cover the chart.

Partly because of her method there are many problems which she disclaims. She expressly states that she does not attempt to provide canons of the goodness or badness of works of art. What she has in fact achieved is not just another system of æsthetics. The book is profoundly stimulating because it is something much more like an instrument, a new way of looking at the arts (one which she herself would call *fecund*) which is a method of continual discovery. The texture of her writing is agreeably aerated. It is just possible that this is due to the fact that she has schooled herself to listen to the babblings of artists rather than to the pronouncements of professors on the subject of artistic creation.

Nevertheless, in enjoying the book I naturally have not found myself in total agreement with it. However much, on the basis of her method, she claims the right to leave aside the problem of evaluation, I think she leaves it too long and too far aside, and the reader begins to be aware of it and to want to bring it into the discussion. By the problem of evaluation I refer not only to the comparative values of individual works of art but to the question of the intrinsic relation of any one of them to other values.

According to Mrs. Langer, art completely makes over the whole of its material. The value of its material to tragedy, for instance, is purely structural. Or to put it all in another way, there is no poetry which is not pure poetry. But if all that is true, where does the difference lie between good and bad, or greater and lesser art? She might be taken as implying that the answer lies in the complete mastery of material by form. Then is the perfect miniature exactly comparable with the Mona Lisa? Towards the end of the book she is consistent enough to say that "works of art are not comparable." But she still allows for a scale in the works of any given master. How and why? Moreover, she explicitly states that on the whole the question of comparative value is better not asked. I suggest that this is a question which people will not stop asking, and that you cannot shut them up in this way. It is one of the essential ways in which they orientate themselves when faced with any new work of art. Moreover, Mrs. Langer, to my mind, gets herself into trouble with Collingwood's "corruption of consciousness" which she accepts as establishing a canon of "false" art as opposed to "true" art. Nobody can help comparing works of art; and if you do compare them, *a fortiori* if you bring in ideas about "corruption of consciousness," you will find yourself referring to standards which are not purely artistic.

There is some indication that she may be going to deal with this question of value in another volume; but the question does appear to be structural in the present work, because she continually refers, as an artistic essential, to something which she calls "life-import." I cannot help thinking that this conception provides some feeling, if not degree, of evaluation.

THE concrete problem from which she starts is artistic creation. Art, for her, covers not only poetry, painting, sculpture, music, dancing, architecture, but pottery, textile design, and even what she calls the "applied art" of discursive literature—which would of course include some scientific

* *Feeling and Form*. By SUZANNE K. LANGER. Routledge and Kegan Paul. 28s.

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writing. Looking at the artist, the question she asks is: What is he making? Faced with the more ordinary questions: What is the artist trying to say? What is his message?—Mrs. Langer replies in effect that he is not trying to *say* anything. Where a work of art obviously looks as if it were at least partially intended to represent something, or to imitate something —as in the case, let us say, of a commissioned group of sculpture or some programme music —Mrs. Langer would say that the artistic process completely removes these works from the world of actuality and therefore from representation or imitation. Further, she says that *all* works of art are thus isolated by the creative process from the world of actuality, even those which seem to remain most solidly within it. Architecture, for instance, presents its illusion by creating an "ethnic domain"—"a physically present human environment that expresses the characteristic rhythmic functional patterns which constitute a culture." It creates an *image* of a culture.

This isolation she accounts for by her concept of "virtuality." What the artist (of every kind) creates is an illusion or "semblance." Even argument or connected discourse when it appears in a poem is, according to Mrs. Langer, only virtual; just like all the other experiences which may appear in the poem. Wordsworth, she says, stepping outside the "Intimations of Immortality," would not have defended or even debated the Platonic doctrine of transcendental remembrance. What is in the poem is the experience of having so great an idea, with all the excitement attaching to it. But surely even *that* was a real experience, not merely a virtual one. And it got into the poem. One has to stop somewhere—or begin somewhere.

Nevertheless her concept of virtuality is illuminating. The idea that a poem is a virtual, not a real, experience throws, I think, some new light on Mr. Eliot's famous "objective correlative"; and in most of the other arts the concept helps one to see what is being done which is specific and, at the same time, characteristic of all activity which may be called artistic.

But disagreement does not seem to depend merely on how familiar one is with any given art. I believe Mrs. Langer when she says that painting and sculpture organise a virtual space, not a real one. I ponder when I see that

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she says that music exists in or creates virtual time. When I see that she calls upon Bergson and his theory of subjective time to support her, I ponder a great deal more. We need not go into the difficulty that Bergson regarded his "subjective time"—the time in which, according to him, growth and change take place—as much more real than mathematical time. By Bergsonian time Mrs. Langer here means the same as her virtual time. Something might be made out of this for music that was only performed in a conductor's head; but as soon as an orchestra or a performer is called in, mathematical time takes over. (I mean by this not that music is performed with mechanical regularity but that its deviations from such regularity are themselves precise and are the subject of artistic discussion.)

But I do not think that her Bergsonian and therefore suspect view of the nature of experienced time in music necessarily invalidates the rest of her theory. That may be because when she is talking of the other temporal arts—particularly drama and fiction—she appears to consider time rather more objectively. In narrative fiction, she says, the artist creates a virtual history, an impersonal past; and in drama, a virtual future, or the illusion of a destiny. In drama, for instance, there is a sense of time, of an impending future, in every incident, speech, and gesture. What distinguishes "virtual time" as far as literature and poetry are concerned is what one might call its enclosed continuity, the inherent form which the artist creates out of it; and this is a more comfortable usage than she has found for the concept in her discussion of music, and does not involve us in the Bergsonian schizophrenia of internal and external time.

I FIND everything she has to say about poetry and literature fascinating and stimulating. But her view of morality as also part of the artistic means seems to me to be in a more arguable category. Morality, she says, is only thematic material in imaginative writing and in both tragedy and comedy. In the section on comedy, one of the most interesting, she quotes George Meredith with approval, for pointing out the essentially sexual (we might almost say Thurberesque) nature of true comedy, its concern with the war of men and women. And she quotes him with disapproval for his belief that comedy is concerned with the social-moral order. And here one begins to wonder again. Unless it is conducted in the light of principles, the war of the sexes, like any other war, is not significant. And it also is not comic; although it might be funny. The principles are not eternal, but they are extraneous to the work of art.

If the final work of art is always a symbol, it is not a closed symbol, especially to a writer with Mrs. Langer's rootedly semantic outlook. It *means* something. And you come round again and begin worrying about all that moral material when it is not being used thematically in a work of art. In other words, *Macbeth* is more significant than *Sweeney Todd*, partly because its "thematic material," however transformed into the work of art, is more significant, more real, more disturbing, more unavoidable.

I love a good system as much as anyone, but perhaps Mrs. Langer's system is just a little too good. In her view, discursive thought can be a variety of applied art. I ask myself if this opinion has not too much influenced her in the writing of her own book. One begins to see the "composition" filling up every gap of the canvas. She believes that by methods like her own the main questions of philosophy, so often regarded as insoluble, can at last be solved, that *Philosophie* can at last be put out of its *Misère*. Are we really to believe, or hope, that some subjects will go finally off the market? Sheer altruism, let alone probability, inclines one to the view that subsequent thinkers in any field, especially in æsthetics, will always find something to argue about.

What is excellent about her book is something continually implied rather than stated, a profound conviction that artistic creation is an essential and prime human value. This is based on the view of symbolisation stated in her earlier book, *Philosophy in a New Key*—that it is the basic human mental characteristic. Any poet who reads *Feeling and Form* should be confirmed in his poetry. There is nothing to stop him being logician, priest, or politician; but he will see that he carries out these activities valuably in so far as he makes them over into his poetry.

Kathleen Nott

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